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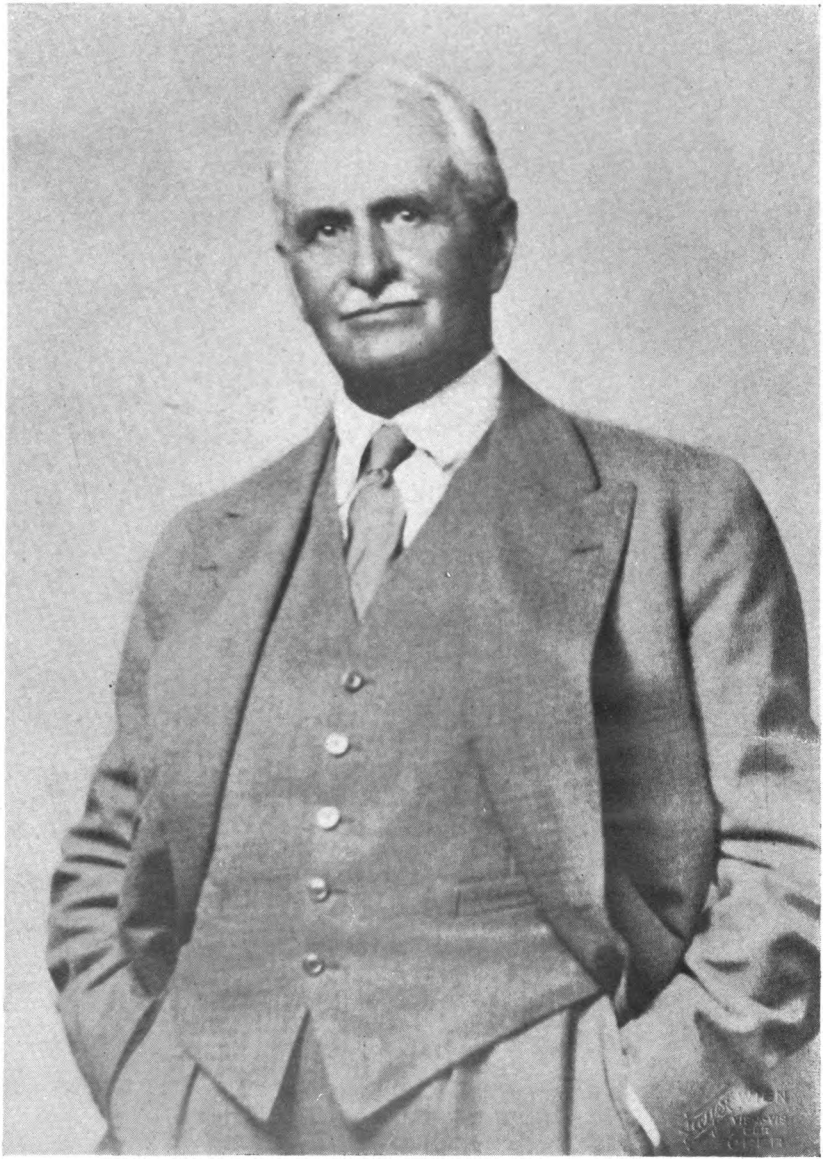

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Robert S. Hickens.

U. OF MICH.

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YESTERDAY

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ROBERT HICHENS

WITH HALF-TONE FRONTISPIECE

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To

MY SISTER MILLICENT GALPIN

and

MY BROTHER ARTHUR

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I

I CAME into the world on the fourteenth of November in the year eighteen hundred and sixty-four. My birthplace was the rectory of Speldhurst, a village in Kent a few miles from Tunbridge Wells. A very charming village it was, I believe. At any rate, when I began to take notice I thought it so. The country round us was delightful, and my father, who was a clergyman, and a man without ambition, always seemed to be thoroughly satisfied with the fate that kept him quietly in Speldhurst until I was about fifteen years old. He looked after the parish thoroughly well, and he and my mother were perpetually helping the parishioners who streamed to our house in search of aid; rather material, I think, than moral. Yet I have always wondered why exactly he elected to become a clergyman.

Certainly, even in those days, he was not a typical one.

He detested the orthodox clerical attire and I never saw him wear it. The jampot collar, the black pudding hat were not for him. He never adopted what is known as the clerical voice, and he was sometimes decidedly unexpected in church, though never intentionally sensational. There was nothing melodramatic about him, but he yielded rather easily to his inclinations, even in church, and they were sometimes peculiar.

One characteristic of his which, when I was getting on in years, caused me a good deal of amusement was his mania for changing what is usually left unchanged. Even hymns he would often deal drastically with. Short hymns he left as they were. But long hymns tempted his mania. And I often heard him give out a hymn thus:

"Hymn number so and so. The first, third, and last verses only!"

or,

"Hymn so and so, the first, second, and fourth verses, leaving out the third and last verses."

Why he did this I never discovered. I never asked him about it and he never, to me, alluded to it. But it often confused the congregation, some of whom forgot what verses were to be sung and what were not, so that frequently my mother would be singing one verse and a neighbour at the same time dealing lustily with another. On one occasion even, when the last verse was, by my father's orders, to be omitted, the organist, a Miss Catherine Barker, forgot it, and continued to play when the choir, and of course my father, were preparing in silence to fall on their knees. Apparently not noticing this, on account no doubt of the noise of the instrument, she went on serenely playing to the end unaccompanied by the voices.

My father certainly bore her no malice on this account, for later

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he put up a beautiful painted window, designed and executed by Morris and Burne-Jones, to her memory. It may be seen to this day in Speldhurst Church with many other Morris and Burne-Jones windows, all ordered and paid for by my father. The most beautiful of these in my opinion is the well-known "Angel window."

My grandfather, on my father's side, was a rich and very successful stockbroker, who founded the well-known firm of "Hichens and Harrison" on the Stock Exchange and presided over it till his death, which took place when I was very young. My father, and his elder brother, Sikes Hichens, could have gone into the firm, but they both chose to become clergymen. My uncle Sikes was given by my grandfather the family living of Guilsborough in Northamptonshire. And there he remained till he was an old man and retired from work. They both went to Oxford and both were clever men. But I don't think either of them had any worldly ambition.

Why had my father wished to become a clergyman?

When I reached the often indiscreet years of discretion I sometimes asked myself that question.

As a quite young man I suppose he had some sporting tendencies. I believe this because he went out to Pau in France, where he met and married my mother, and used to hunt there. (He was never a hunting parson in England.)

Later he was very interested in dogs. This was in my day at Speldhurst. And we kept a good many dogs, both mastiffs and pugs, as well as a retriever or two, and at one time a wire-haired terrier. We exhibited at dog shows and won some prizes.

We also kept horses and a pony for me to ride, and had a coachman and a man to look after the dogs. And when every summer we journeyed up to the north to spend seven or eight weeks in Cumberland, first in the Lake district, later on by the sea at Seascale, we took the dogs with us, as well as about forty pieces of luggage. We were met at the station of Keswick by a coach drawn by three horses, and in and on this drove triumphantly along Derwent Water to Newton Place, a house my father had rented in Borrowdale.

I never thought my father should, like his father, have become a business man. He was totally unsuited to the brilliant management of money, as he proved when I was much older. But he seemed to me so naturally unclerical, and so strongly interested in the arts and in literature, and so definitely suited to succeed in one art, the art of music, that I wondered why he had not decided to become a musician.

Perhaps such a choice would have shocked my grandfather. Later on my father proved that he was unshockable in that way. For he allowed me to go to the Royal College of Music in London instead of going to Oxford.

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He had a very fine bass voice, sang really well, played the piano and the organ, occasionally composed church music, and was an admirable conductor of choirs and big choruses. All this he did, of course, *en amateur*. But even when he was an undergraduate at Oxford he gave up, I was told, the greater part of his time to music, and, in consequence probably, only took his degree and became an M.A. and never aspired to honours.

On the death of my grandfather he came into a fortune. My grandfather had several children, among them an unmarried daughter who was delicate and went to live at Pau, but he was able to leave my father a capital that must, when he first came into possession of it, have brought in at least three thousand pounds a year. I gathered this when I was about to go, at the age of ten, to my first school, at Hurstleigh, near Tunbridge Wells. My father called me into his library and informed me that when I was grown up I should have to choose some profession and work for my living.

"For when I die," he said, "I shall only be able to leave you children enough to bring each of you in five hundred pounds a year. For the rest you must look to yourself."

As we were five children, three boys and two girls, and as my mother would naturally be left quite as much as, or more than, we were, I calculated that my father must be worth sixty thousand pounds at least.

I remember that five hundred pounds a year seemed to me then quite a wonderful income to expect from anyone.

I never received it. But that belongs to a much later time. My father lived to be eighty-five, and by that time his financial situation was entirely altered.

So was mine, but in a different way.

When I look back to my extreme youth I seem to see a rather frivolous but well-meaning little boy, who was extremely anxious to have a nice time, and who on the whole managed to have it.

Before I went to school my sisters and I had governesses who lived in the house. The first governess was a Miss Lucas, and I remember how much I admired her hands. I thought them quite beautiful and was never tired of looking at them. She became engaged to be married, left us and was replaced by a Miss Andrews. This lady was musical and played well on the piano, which excited my wonder and devotion. For I was already ardently fond of music. A friend of ours, a Mr. Boissier, who lived not far off, near Groombridge, played the piano brilliantly and also the organ, and he and Miss Andrews played duets together on two pianos at three or four charity concerts in the neighbourhood. Mr. Boissier had a high, almost soprano voice in talking, was bald and wore a monocle. He was a cousin of the Lady Brassey who wrote *The Voyage of the Sunbeam*, and travelled

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sometimes with her on the yacht. On Sundays he occasionally came over to Speldhurst, played the organ in the church and had luncheon and tea with us. I thought him a very remarkable person.

Another frequent visitor on Sundays was a Sir Walter Stirling, an elderly baronet who had a country place a few miles away, and who admired my father's preaching. He came to the afternoon service on foot, and if the weather was damp used to bring a second pair of socks with him, go to the church early and change his socks in a pew. After the service he invariably came to tea with us. I believe he was an exceedingly original individual, what used to be called "a character." We had three pugs at that time, and I remember in the winter Sir Walter, Mr. Boissier, my mother and father having tea by the fire, their conversation being accompanied by the snoring of the pugs, Sam, Dinah and Topsy, who were stretched out on a rug before the blazing logs.

A German governess used to ride over from Southborough, not far from Tunbridge, on certain days to teach my eldest sister, Margaret, the beginnings of German.

My mother, who was Irish, belonged to the Smythe family of West Meath, and had spent her youth and been married in Pau, where her father and mother lived, of course spoke French, and my father every day of his life wrote his diary in French, but they did not speak French with us children. I wish they had, as then I should not have been obliged to acquire such French as I know now with difficulty at a later period, instead of picking it up as a young child so easily can. Although she had Irish blood, and had been brought up in France, my mother was, I think, typically English. She was very good-looking but seemed quite unaware of it. A less vain woman I never have met. She was also quite unworldly, though she enjoyed life in a quiet way. My father ruled in the house.

We were brought up in an atmosphere full of music, poetry, good literature and pleasant occupations. My father sang and played, read Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold, Rossetti and Tennyson aloud to us; Browning too, but only as we grew older. The art of painting also had its place in our youthful lives. My father, when he came into his money, bought pictures, decorated the house with Morris papers and carpets, collected blue-and-white china, and acquired many books. I remember his coming home one day with a volume by a new author about whom he was enthusiastic. It was Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree*. And he read much of it aloud to us. A little later he bought *Far from the Madding Crowd*, which he considered a masterpiece.

Then came the period of the painted windows, with which he nearly filled Speldhurst Church. My first sight of a celebrity was connected with them. For William Morris journeyed from London to see them in their places and came to lunch with my people. I

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lunched at the same table and remember gazing at him with veneration and awe. I thought he looked like a wonderful seaman, a Viking perhaps. His talk was exuberant. He seemed full of vitality and enthusiasm. Both he and my father were evidently very proud of the windows.

Soon after this Queen Victoria's daughter, the Princess Louise, who had married the Marquis of Lorne, came to live at a place not very far from us. One summer day we had been with my father for a picnic in Broadwater Forest, and came home in the afternoon rather dishevelled and mossy from tumbling about in the wood. My sister and I went with my father into the vestry of the church. I think he was going to play the organ. Anyhow, I remember that he had taken off his jacket and was in his shirt-sleeves when the vestry door was opened by a strange man, who asked my father if he could bring in two ladies who were anxious to see the Burne-Jones windows. My father said, "Certainly, with pleasure." While the stranger went to fetch them my father hastily put on his jacket. Just as he had got it on the man reappeared with two ladies. Directly he saw them my father gave us a sign to run away. They were the Princess Louise and the Duchess of Argyll. The man was the Marquis of Lorne.

We went out into the churchyard and saw a carriage and a pair of horses waiting in the road at the gate, with a little crowd of interested people near it. In about half an hour the visitors came out with my father, got into the carriage and drove away, after expressing their warm admiration of the windows.

We wished we had not been so mossy. But it couldn't be helped. That was my first sight of Royalty.

My chief pleasures at this tender age were connected with my pony —I began to ride when I was very young—and with our many dogs. I was photographed in a proud attitude with Sam and Topsy. And we walked out every day accompanied by them, by Dinah, and by two magnificent mastiffs, Rupert and Mab. The only drawback attached to these walks was connected with our neighbours, the Powells. Mr. Powell was the Squire of the village and owned most of the land in the neighbourhood. He was closely connected with the famous family of the Baden-Powells, who often came to stay with him and his wife at the Manor House. Mrs. Powell, a very dignified and commanding lady, drove almost every day a pair of ponies in a little phaeton, and was always accompanied by some running dogs. Unfortunately the Powell dogs detested the Hichens dogs, and their loathing was heartily returned. In consequence of this enduring enmity a good deal of scrapping and some actual fighting occurred, which almost created bad blood between the two families, who otherwise appreciated each other. And when we saw in the distance Mrs. Powell's ponies trotting briskly in our direction we always did

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our best to drag our big dogs into an adjoining field, or to hide them behind some trees, till the danger was past. The pugs were left in the road, as nothing ever disturbed their snorting benignity.

The later Head Scout, long since known all over the world as Lord Baden-Powell, travelled down from London several times to sing comic songs at village concerts in Speldhurst, and more than once came to supper with us afterwards. At one of these suppers I put in an appearance and, it seems, devoured a vast quantity of oysters under the observant eyes of "B. P.," who later drew and painted a picture of a pig in full evening dress surrounded by a chaos of oyster shells, with under it the following legend—"Master Robert making a meal." He was kind enough to send this to me on Valentine's Day.

His only sister, Aggie, who has helped him so splendidly as head of the Girl Guides, was a great friend of mine, and even since the death of her brilliant brother has written affectionate letters to me. She had a terrific sense of humour, which now and then showed itself in a very practical way. On one occasion she locked Mrs. Powell, who was emphatically a personage to be reckoned with, up in a cupboard, and refused to let her out until she had exacted some favour—I forget what —from her. Mrs. Powell, who sat always at church in the front pew facing the choir, and kept a stern eye on the choir-boys, one winter, when several of the boys sneezed in church, called them together after the service into the vestry, and in the presence of my father informed them that it was irreverent to sneeze in the house of God. Unfortunately, a Sunday or two later she was herself seized with an irresistible fit of sneezing, the attempted suppression of which caused a tumultuous outburst, which delighted the choir and gave matter for thought to the congregation.

Charlie Powell, the only child of the marriage, was, till my father died, one of his greatest friends, and came up north year after year to spend some weeks with us in Seascale.

While I was still very young there was a dog show at the Crystal Palace and my father entered our mastiffs, a pug or two, and a wire-haired terrier which we had recently acquired. For this show my mother, father and I drove to stay at Sydenham, having dispatched the big dogs ahead of us with a man who looked after them. The pugs and the terrier—the latter my special pet—we took in the carriage with us. We believed the terrier to be a champion. Perhaps he was, and we made a mistake about him and entered him in a wrong class. Anyhow, this is what happened.

On the day of the judging I was permitted to show this dog, and went in good time to the cage in which he was displayed in a long line of comrades. What was my astonishment to see that all the dogs to right and left of him had long silky coats which were being sedulously

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brushed and combed by their owners. Some were, I remember, even parted in the middle like the hair on a pretty girl's head. My small champion—if he was one—was wire-haired and there was nothing long and silky about him. However, I plucked up courage and hoped for the best.

The moment came for the judging. We all formed up before the judges and paraded our pets. There were, I think, three judges, stern and alert looking men, decidedly "doggy" in appearance.

There was an impressive pause while they looked the crowd of dogs over. Almost immediately their critical eyes fell upon my dog and rested on him for a long moment. Then they conferred together, and finally ordered me to take him out of the ring.

Feeling sure that he was already selected for the first prize, I proudly obeyed. But my pride was short-lived. He was disqualified. Scarlet with shame and vexation, I was compelled to take him back covered with ignominy to his cage. I have had several shocks in my long life, but this was one of the worst I remember. I felt degraded in the eyes of the world.

Another youthful shock which upset me seriously soon after this did not bring with it any sense of personal degradation, but was nevertheless difficult for a child to bear with equanimity. It occurred in the winter-time, just after Christmas.

At an early age I became passionately fond of dancing, and my sisters and I had dancing lessons from a Miss Walsh when we were little more than mites. Now and then, but very seldom, a child's party enabled us to exhibit our prowess in this accomplishment. Such an opportunity was offered to us at this Christmas-time by some rich friends who lived several miles off on the other side of Tunbridge Wells. They sent us an invitation to a children's evening party at which there was to be dancing.

At this rather luxurious period of our lives my father had three carriages. One was a private omnibus, large and roomy, with a door at one end. There was a high box for the coachman, who could not, I believe, see into the omnibus from his box. Our coachman's name was Parvin, and he was the husband of our cook. Parvin was an excellent coachman but he was too fond of the bottle, and this made him sometimes careless and, on one occasion, dangerous.

Well, the evening of the party arrived, a bitterly cold evening with frost. We were to start about seven o'clock, and Parvin brought the omnibus round to the front door at that hour. But we were not quite ready to go. The final touches to our careful, if not elaborate, toilets had still to be given. My small Eton jacket wanted still an extra brush, and the sashes of my sisters were not quite as they should be. So Parvin must wait.

One of the servants, because of the cold, got out a heavy fur rug,

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opened the front door and the omnibus door, put in the rug and then banged the door of the omnibus and returned into the house, of course shutting the house door behind her. Meanwhile we went on with our toilets and at last felt perfectly ready to dazzle the children's party. Full of eager excitement and expectation we hurried downstairs with our mother and nurses, my father coming with us to "see us off." The parlour-maid opened the door into the night. There was no omnibus outside.

"Where's the carriage?" we piped. "Where's Parvin?"

"He must have got tired of waiting and gone round to the stables," said my father. "Tell him to come back at once."

The parlour-maid ran. We waited impatiently. But no Parvin appeared. What had happened was this. Parvin on his box had heard the maid come out and the carriage door open, and had then heard the door shut with a bang. He had probably had a little too much to "keep out the frost." Anyhow, he had assumed that we had got into the carriage, and, knowing the house we were going to, he had immediately whipped up his horses and driven off to the far side of Tunbridge Wells. We heard afterwards of the astonishment of our friends when on the carriage door being opened in front of their house the carriage was found to be empty.

There was no dancing for us that night. I don't want to appear revengeful, but I never forgave Parvin. The sword of disappointment had cut too deeply into my boyish heart.

Not very long after this, when my mother and father were driving out in the open landau, Parvin of course on the box, they noticed that he was swaying to and fro like a distracted pendulum that had lost its sense of direction. Before anything could be done he fell backwards into the carriage, with his legs in the air and his head on my mother's lap. Fortunately my father managed to stop the horses before there was a serious accident.

After this departure from coachman's etiquette Parvin had to go. This was a pity, for his wife was an excellent cook, and my father greatly appreciated good cooking and was also a connoisseur of wine.

Once my father had a man staying with him who upset the connoisseur in him seriously. After dinner, at dessert, without telling him what the wine was, he gave this man some superlative Château Lafitte. The man drank a glass of it unconcernedly and his glass was refilled. Still he made no comment on what he was drinking, and at last my father could not help saying, "I hope you like this wine?"

"Oh yes, it's all right, Mr. Hichens, quite all right. Pray don't trouble to get anything special out for me. This will do very well."

That guest was not asked to the house a second time.

Now and then people came to stay with us. One of these was a

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painter called J. C. Moore, celebrated at that time for his portraits of children, and a brother of Albert Moore, also a well-known painter. My father engaged him to make portraits of my elder sister and me. He was unwell at the time and very nervous and irritable. He could not bear that his work should be looked at until it was entirely finished. The worst of it was that he seemed unable to finish anything and was never satisfied with what he was doing. However, at last he completed a very charming drawing of me as a child, which I still have, and a less satisfactory drawing of my sister, Margaret. I have also a delightful painting by him of the river Tiber with the dome of St. Peter's, Rome, in the distance.

A painter who had a good deal of celebrity in my youth was Simeon Solomon. My father bought several paintings by him, and a charming drawing of three heads, called "Two Sleepers and One that Watcheth," which was left to me. Simeon Solomon had great talent but he got into difficulties and died, I believe, in poverty. He was his own enemy.

Others who came to us were Mr. and Mrs. Poynter, and my cousin Andrew Hichens and his lovely wife, who had been May Prinsep, and who, after the death of Andrew, married the second Lord Tennyson, the son of the poet.

Mr. Poynter was afterwards Sir Edward Poynter and President of the Royal Academy. While he was with us he painted a good deal in the neighbourhood and my father bought two or three of his pictures. One was of "The Valley," an exquisite landscape on Mr. Powell's estate near us. I have two of his pictures, one left to me by Lady Tennyson and another of a landscape near Pau. Sir Edward Poynter very kindly long afterwards put me up for election at the Athenaeum in London, a club I still belong to. He was a highly cultivated and very musical man and a great friend of my father, whom he always called "Freddy." Mrs. Poynter, afterwards Lady Poynter, was very good-looking and extremely amusing and witty. She was a sister of Lady Burne-Jones. Sir Edward, in spite of all his success, was extraordinarily pessimistic and subject to fits of black melancholy. I entertained them both long afterwards on Lago di Como when I had a villa there.

Another painter, called Chapman, came to us to paint a portrait of my mother. This was exhibited at the Royal Academy. My mother was rather offended by a paragraph about it which appeared in a London paper, and which described her as a pretty woman who had posed "with a sort of awkward grace." Later on J. C. Moore made an excellent drawing of her.

Every Saturday during the autumn, winter, and spring season of music in London my father went up to London to attend the famous concerts of chamber music called generally "the Saturday Pops." He

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had always the same seat in St. James's Hall, and next to him sat a middle-aged solemn-looking lady, who was accompanied by a gentleman with what my father described as "a painfully scorbutic complexion." He mentioned them to me and said they were the ugliest couple he had ever seen. He also told me that during the pause in the middle of the concert various young men used to come up to talk to them, and always with a very deferential demeanour.

"I really must find out who they are," he said. "So terribly ugly and yet evidently so much sought after."

One Saturday evening when he came back from London he said, "Now I know who those ugly people are."

"Who?" I said.

"The woman is the famous George Eliot, and the man is the famous George Lewes."

Many years later I met Mr. Cross, who married George Eliot after George Lewes's death. He was a tall, intellectual-looking man and had a charming manner. He spoke to me once about his wonderful wife with deep veneration. The way in which he talked of her reminded me of a conversation I had later on with Mr. Burdett-Coutts, who married the Baroness Burdett-Coutts when she was quite an old lady. Evidently he almost worshipped her memory—she was dead when I knew him—and regretted her death. He said she had the finest character of any woman he had known and was "a wonderful companion." When she was alive I met them a few times at parties, and I remember one night when we were all going away his carefully wrapping her up in an Indian shawl as if she were something very precious. I have known several men who married women a great many years older than themselves, and who certainly loved and admired them. One was Baron Cederström, who married Adelina Patti, the world's most famous opera-singer. But my absurd adventure with Madame Patti happened about thirty years later than the time I am dealing with now.

Enough of quite early childhood! I am very fond of children—regarded as a race—just as I am exceedingly fond of dogs, but, I know not why, stories about children and stories about dogs soon pall upon me. In stories they always seem to be so abnormally intelligent.

The time came for me to go to my first school.

For some reason which he never enlarged on to me, but which I believe I eventually guessed, my father was determined that, though his sons must of course go to school, they should never go to a boarding-school. We were all to be what were called "day boys."

My mother had three sisters, who were then unmarried and who lived at a place called Rusthall, much nearer to Tunbridge Wells than my home. It was decided that I should go to live with them, and be

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educated at a well-known private school called Hurstleigh, just outside Tunbridge Wells, which was presided over by a Mr. Maberley Smith, afterwards Canon Smith and rector of Penshurst.

Thither I went with many misgivings, and I attended that school until we left Speldhurst.

There were about forty boys, nearly all of them boarders. Among them were Lord William Neville, who later on became notorious; Lord Dungarvon, whom I met years afterwards when he was Lord Cork, a clubman and a rather astonishing personality; Reginald Lister, later Sir Reginald Lister, a brother of "The Ancestor"; Lord Ribblesdale, who married Lady Oxford's sister; Harry Melville and his brother Francis; two Milbanks, one called Godolphin, which I thought a most astonishing name; a de Moleyns, a Ferguson, and many others whose names I forget. My special friends at that early time were Lister and the Melvilles.

Lister had a charming personality, and already showed traces of the intelligence and culture which made him so universally popular when he embarked on the diplomatic career. Harry Melville, who years later was famous as a dandy and wit in London and Paris, and of whom Osbert Sitwell wrote under the title of *The Machine Breaks Down*, was a very amusing and characteristic boy, full of mannerisms which never left him in after-life. Francis was quieter. Dungarvon seemed to me then a dashing personality, quite different from the very peculiar Lord Cork whose gruff remarks were eventually quoted in London clubs. But the boy whose appearance impressed me most in the first days at school was Lord William Neville. He left almost directly I came to Hurstleigh, being older than I was. But I remember him very well. I even remember very absurdly thinking that he looked like a bird of Paradise. How could that have been? But I thought so.

Probably many people still alive can recall him as the smartest man in London. He had two lovely twin sisters, Lady Rose and Lady Violet. I remember seeing them in after-years. They lived then at Eridge Castle, not far from Tunbridge Wells. I went to a meet of hounds there on my pony.

While at the Hurstleigh school I had two privileges which I greatly valued. My father paid for me to have music lessons, from a Mr. Irons, and also for me to ride twice a week. I believe I was the only boy who had music lessons. But we were several riding boys, sometimes as many as six. And our headmaster's wife, Mrs. Maberley Smith, who was an excellent horsewoman, often rode with us. The horses came from a riding school at Tunbridge Wells and we were always accompanied by a riding master, who gave those needing it hints on horsemanship. In those days of boyhood I rode well and felt entirely at home on even a difficult pony.

We went often to Broadwater Forest, and sometimes on the way

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home visited a field where "jumps" had been put up. There were graduated flights of hurdles, over which Mrs. Maberley Smith and the riding master flew in brilliant style, and I took the lower jumps with some of the other boys. Although I was at that time a completely fearless rider I had several falls. Once, on Rusthall common, when I was jumping a line of furze-bushes, my horse, Selim, stopped dead, but I went on and landed on my head on the far side of the bushes. The same horse threw me once in the field where the jumps were put up. When I was going at some hurdles he refused abruptly and shied, throwing me over the hurdles. He then proceeded to jump them without his rider, and trod on my ankle when he alighted. But boys seem very seldom to be hurt by falls and I was no exception to the rule. Once, however, when we were going at a gallop, my horse bolted into a shallow pond and fell with me, and I returned to Hurstleigh wet to the skin. One result of this was not too disagreeable, for my form master, Mr. Wilson, told me I was much too damp to take part in a translation of Ovid and ordered me home, to astonish my aunts.

Some fifty years after this I spent a winter in Paris at the Hôtel Plaza Athénée in order to have daily treatment from an American chiropractor in the hope of curing a tiresome and chronic affection of the throat. As the treatment had very little effect the chiropractor sent me to a specialist for an X-ray examination. When the picture had been taken and was forwarded to my man he summoned me to him and said,

"Tell me, have you ever had a bad fall, or falls? From a horse, for instance?"

I said that when I was a boy I had had several falls.

"Ever a fall on your head?"

"Yes, once or twice. But I was never seriously hurt. And these falls occurred when I was less than fifteen."

"Ah! And since then? Any fall from a horse since then?"

"Some time ago when I was living in Egypt a big horse I had there came down with me once in the desert. But I was not in the least hurt. Why do you ask?"

He then told me that the X-rays showed that I had a completely smashed vertebra at the back of the neck.

"And that's why my treatment hasn't cured you," he said.

I replied that I simply couldn't believe it. He then showed me the picture and pointed to a mysterious shadow on it.

"There it is!" he said.

I gave up the treatment, paid him, and went to my home in Switzerland. When I got there my friend, John Knittel, the well-known Swiss novelist, consulted a famous Swiss surgeon about me. He said that what the chiropractor had said was absolute nonsense. If I had a

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smashed vertebra I could not possibly be able to live an ordinary life without any pain or difficulty of any kind except the chronic catarrh which I had tried to get rid of in Paris. The X-rays had lied. Or the Paris doctor had lied about them.

This happened years ago and I can still hold my head up in a difficult world.

At school I was by no means brilliant but I managed to win a few prizes; three, I think, or possibly four. I don't know where they are now. Probably in store with other possessions of mine at Pickford's emporium in Canterbury.

My schooldays at Hurstleigh flitted by uneventfully and pleasantly enough, varied by the usual cricket and football, the piano lessons with Mr. Irons and the weekly riding parties. At home I rode my own pony, and I also learnt to drive and was very proud of it. When I was little more than twelve I was able to control a spirited horse in a dogcart, and often went into Tunbridge Wells alone, except for a couple of pugs safely ensconced in the folds of the rug spread over my knees. Only once I remember having difficulty with a horse I was driving.

I had gone shopping in Tunbridge Wells on a winter day and was returning home over the Tunbridge Wells common as twilight was coming on. The horse I had then was a chestnut and a spirited animal but free from vice. Soon after we reached the common, and were going towards the road that divides it from the common of Rusthall, the horse began to show acute signs of nervousness. He pulled fiercely on the reins, plunged, snorted, and was evidently trying to bolt. I could not imagine what was the matter with him. He nearly pulled me out of my seat and I had the greatest difficulty in controlling him. He broke into a canter that degenerated into a gallop. It was as if the devil was behind him. I just managed to hang on to him, and when we were half-way across Rusthall common he gradually quieted down. But there was foam on his shining chestnut coat and he was obviously still in a fever.

Completely puzzled by his extraordinary behaviour I drove him home, and when I got there I told my father and the groom what had occurred. They were as puzzled as I was. But on the following day the mystery was cleared up. A travelling circus with a menagerie of wild beasts had, unknown to me, arrived in the town, or in a camping place quite near the town, on the preceding evening. I had heard nothing of it. No distant roar of lions, trumpeting of elephants or snarling of tigers had reached my ears. But Roland's sense of smell had told him that danger was near, and he had instinctively tried to bolt from it.

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II

WHEN I was just on fifteen a complete change came in my life and in the lives of all my family. One day my father announced to us that he had decided to give up looking after the parish of Speldhurst, and in fact to give up all paid work, and that before long we were to remove from our beloved Kent and to pitch our tent in Gloucestershire. He was going immediately to Bristol to look out for a suitable tent in Clifton, the neighbouring suburb, known for its big public school, Clifton College, to which place of light and learning he intended me to go at once, of course as a "day boy," while my two brothers would go to the Junior school. As for himself, he would no doubt find plenty to do without troubling about the needs of a country parish.

This last statement I believed. For my father had so many resources within himself that I don't think he was ever bored. Passionately interested in music, a great and persistent reader of all sorts of books, a lover of poetry and a student of it, an extremely sociable man, who enjoyed general society and could shine in it, for he was a really admirable conversationalist and a most sympathetic listener to the conversation of others, a great walker—he had by this time climbed every mountain of any note in the Lake district—he would never be at a loss for "things to do."

But what about all of us, uprooted from Kent, snatched away from our dear Speldhurst and Tunbridge Wells? And what about our household? What about our animals? What about horses and dogs?

And about our friends?

My father said that we should soon find friends in Gloucestershire.

Was that possible?

I expressed some boyish doubts to my mother. But she, as always at that time, considered, or at any rate seemed to consider—who knows what goes on secretly in the mind of a woman?—that whatever my father decided on must be for the best. We were going to give up Kent; we were going to Clifton. That was quite as it should be.

We went there.

Oh, what a change it was!

From that day on we had no more horses. We had no more dogs. The man who had been fond of horses, the man who had cared so much for dogs that at one time we had had fourteen of them, seemed to have died in my father. An entirely new phase of life opened out before us.

The new "tent" was not very easy to find. My father was extremely particular about his surroundings. So we began life in Clifton at the Clifton Downs Hotel, which was close to the river Avon and within a minute's walk from the famous suspension-bridge. I went through

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the preliminary examination and was entered at Clifton College, which was under the headmastership of the brilliant Mr. J. M. Wilson, a senior wrangler, afterwards an archdeacon and a canon, a bearded marvel, whose sermons in the College chapel were some of the best I have ever heard. Mr. Wilson was, I suppose, a rather untidy man, for I remember that he once complained to Mrs. Wollaston, the extremely witty and impertinent wife of one of the College masters, that people in Clifton had spread about the absurd rumour that he never brushed his hair. Her only comment on this was,

"But *do* you ever brush it?"

After much searching my father rented a large but semi-detached house in the best part of Clifton, close to the "Drinking Fountain," a landmark of Clifton, and at the foot of the far-spreading Clifton Downs. It faced the leafy "Promenade" which skirted the bank of the Avon, and was near enough to the Zoological Gardens for us to hear now and then the dull roar of the lions in captivity there. He had this house papered with the best Morris papers and carpeted with the best Morris carpets, put in all our furniture from Speldhurst and added a lot of new furniture to it, bought some wonderful candelabra for the dining- and drawing-rooms, established a spacious library for himself at the top of the house, and settled down, I think with great contentment, to the new life in Gloucestershire. And I feel almost sure that he was well satisfied with our stay there, which lasted until I was twenty.

It was while I was at Clifton that, as had happened in my father's case, when he was at Oxford, the love of music became a preponderating influence in my life, and led to a most unexpected development in my education, taking me towards a future that had certainly never been thought of as a possible one for me. It led to my removal from Clifton College before my education there was completed; it led to the abandonment of my father's project of sending me to Magdalen College, Oxford, where both my brothers went eventually; it led to the ending of my first real love affair; and it led to my really absurd decision to devote my life to the career of a professional organist.

How amazingly immature I must have been before I was twenty years old—and for a considerable time afterwards! How unworldly I must have been, without knowing it! How curiously kind and unforeseeing my father was! Looking back now, it all seems almost incredible. Nearly all the youths of the present day brought up by people much in the same class as mine, or in classes higher, are, I believe, far more developed mentally, have a far firmer grasp of the essentials of life, and much more definite ideas about what most concerns themselves and their futures, than I had.

And yet I wasn't a stupid boy.

But I was fond of pleasure, I had a strongly frivolous side, had a

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natural bias towards an artistic life, and very little understanding of the value of money. We seemed to have quite enough money then. We had a good house—with not much garden certainly, but still with some garden both before and behind the house. My people entertained a good deal, giving both many dinner-parties and occasional "balls," as large dances were called in those days. When every year we went up to the north we generally travelled, as we had also travelled in my childhood, in a first-class private saloon carriage. I had no reason to bother much about money. Some day I should have five hundred pounds a year. A comfortable future seemed to lie before me. And presently my sisters and I had a very gay time in Clifton.

My education at Clifton College was brought to an end in this way.

Very soon after we settled down in Clifton my father and mother got to know a great many of our neighbours, and my father became well known for his love and understanding of music. He was extremely fond of cathedral music and the organ, and every Sunday afternoon walked into Bristol to the afternoon service in Bristol Cathedral. He soon became acquainted with what was called "the Cathedral Body," and was always given a seat in the choir stalls when he turned up for the services.

The management of the Cathedral music was in the hands of the Precentor officially, but much the strongest personality connected with the Cathedral was Mr. George Riseley, the Cathedral organist, and my father quickly became a friend and adherent of his.

Mr. Riseley was by far the most brilliant and remarkable organist I have ever heard. He was also a naturally pugnacious man, with an iron will and a great self-assurance. And he was a born fighter and no respecter of persons. He was an excellent chorus-master, became a fine orchestral conductor, and was a prodigious worker. In the whole West of England his equal in music was not to be found.

But—oh, he did get on the nerves of self-satisfied clergymen! and I think a good many clergymen closely connected with cathedrals fall into the sin—if it is a sin—of self-satisfaction. Very often—generally, it seemed to me—he was at loggerheads with one or other of the Cathedral Body, and yet everyone knew that he was a quite exceptionally capable musician, one who could with difficulty be replaced.

The great concert hall of Bristol was the Colston Hall and it possessed a magnificent organ. Mr. Riseley, as well as being the Cathedral organist, was the organist of the Colston Hall, and in winter gave weekly organ recitals there on Saturday evenings. He also conducted the famous Orpheus Society, a wonderful chorus of male voices which gave a yearly concert, and formed a large orchestra and instituted a yearly season of orchestral concerts, at each of which a symphony was given, besides concertos, overtures, and solos by well-known singers.

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At one of these, while I was at Clifton, Miss Marie Tempest was the solo-singer. Not content with these multifarious duties, Mr. Riseley was the conductor of the triennial musical festival, which lasted for four days, during which seven concerts were given with the most famous singers of the day, the big four engaged for the oratorios being Madame Albani, Madame Patey, Mr. Edward Lloyd and Mr. Santley. My father became a member of the committee which drew up the programmes for this festival and decided what singers should be engaged. In consequence of this he knew all about the prices paid to the stars. While we were at Clifton Madame Albani, famous also as an opera-singer, was paid five hundred pounds as her fee. Mr. Riseley also took pupils, and eventually I became one of these.

This came about from my infatuation for his performances on the Colston Hall organ. I went again and again to hear them and fell completely under his spell. Secretly I made up my mind that I, too, must become an organist, I, too, must manipulate those serried masses of stops, tread those sonorous pedals, produce those astounding orchestral combinations. When Mr. Riseley played Handel's "The horse and his rider" I was as a boy drunken with enthusiasm. And one day I told my father I didn't want to continue any longer at Clifton College, I didn't want to go up eventually to Oxford, I wanted to become a professional musician, I wanted to become an organist "like Mr. Riseley."

Then the incredible happened! Actually he yielded to my wish. I was taken away from the College and I was given over to Mr. Riseley to do the best he could with me.

I now began a new life, of music and dancing.

Not that I became a professional dancer. God forbid! But while Mr. Riseley, a determined master, made me toil at musical technique, and took me with him continually to the organ-loft of the Cathedral, and to practices of the Cathedral choir, in my leisure hours I gave way joyously to my passion for ballroom dancing.

Those were gay days and nights at Clifton, for afternoon dances were the vogue as well as dances at night, and my two sisters and I, like almost all the young people we knew, were crazy about dancing. The fox-trot we knew not. The tango we had never heard of. We danced the enchanting valse, the frisky polka, the jerky schottische and, to finish up those delightful, delirious evenings, the furious galop. And between whiles we promenaded ceremoniously through the quadrille and the Lancers. Balls and dances we went to, and dances, and two or three balls, we gave. Never in my long life have I enjoyed anything more than those dances in Clifton and Bristol. I was an impassioned dancer and was never tired. My sisters, one older, one younger than myself, were as ardent as I was. At the most brilliant ball we went to, which took place in the Victoria Rooms and was an

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official event attended by all the county magnates as well as by many Cliftonians, I saw for the first time a woman whose beauty was so great that I have never forgotten it. This lady, well known in society, later on became known, at least by name, to the whole English world on account of her connection with the most famous divorce case of my time. Her name was Lady Miles, and she was the wife of Sir Philip Miles, who possessed a fine estate in the country not far from Bristol called Leigh Court. She brought a large party with her to this ball, and among her guests was another wonderfully handsome woman of a different type, dark, with an athletic figure and an audacious gipsy-like look. This was Lady Colin Campbell, whom in later years I became acquainted with and found as intelligent as she was handsome. In the great Colin Campbell divorce case Lady Miles was afterwards the chief witness, and was in the witness-box for hours.

At that time I was only a boy, a dancing boy, and was exceedingly susceptible to feminine beauty, and I remember being romantically attracted by these two sirens, who were surrounded by admiring men and to whom I was not introduced. Lady Miles seemed to me like an Empress. (I had never seen one.) Hers was a regal beauty. During a long life I have met and known many beautiful women, but not one who has effaced the impression she made upon me at the Clifton ball. Later on I saw her two or three times in London; on one occasion driving in a victoria. But I never got to know her. Lady Colin I knew long after her divorce case, when bad health had overtaken her and she had become known as a writer.

While we were in Clifton the Prince of Wales came to stay at Leigh Court, and I saw him for the first time as he drove through a crowd on his way to the Bristol station. It was said in Clifton that during his visit he remarked casually to his hostess that he would like to have his oysters for supper at a certain hour which he named. This caused consternation. For a month with R in it had only just come in. No oysters had been provided and none were to be discovered in Bristol. A telegram was dispatched to a famous fish shop in London; a barrel of oysters was sent off by special train, and at the appointed hour oysters appeared on the Royal table.

The situation was saved, but only after hours of acute anxiety.

In spite of gaieties I worked hard at my music. Between times we all played a great deal of lawn-tennis, both on grass and on asphalt, and often we saw the famous Renshaw brothers play. They belonged to a tennis club to which we also belonged. We skated too; on ice when there was any, on roller skates when, as generally, ice was lacking. For two or three of those years at Clifton there was a mania for roller-skating, and my sisters and I shared it. Sometimes, looking backward, I wonder how we found time to do all we got through. As my power

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over the pianoforte increased, Mr. Riseley made me play in public at three or four concerts. I played at concerts given to amuse audiences in the country at places in our neighbourhood, and I accompanied singers fairly often at concerts for sailors which were given almost every week at the Sailors' Institute in Bristol. These were arranged by an indefatigable lady called Miss Woolham, who lived near to us and gave up most of her life to helping others. My father sang very often at these celebrations and brought the house down with his powerful bass. Invariably I accompanied him. As a reward for this, and to encourage me, he gave me a complete edition of Thackeray's works with illustrations. I was working, of course, at the organ, "that most revengeful of instruments" as Schumann called it, and twice was made by Mr. Riseley to play voluntaries at services in Bristol Cathedral.

Nevertheless, in spite of all these activities, I managed to indulge a growing desire for writing, which dawned in me while I was at Clifton and stealthily, but continuously, increased. At first I wrote love-sick verses—I was usually in love with some girl or other—but finally I embarked on a novel and managed to finish it. I called it *The Coastguard's Secret*, submitted it to a firm of publishers called "Swann Sonnenschein," and actually got it published, though I never made a penny by it. The London *Athenaeum* reviewed it and indicated that possibly some day its author might write something better. My father, who never saw the manuscript till it was published, read it, and I remember his saying to me one evening, "I don't think much of the beginning of this book of yours, Robert." To which I replied with a humble and non-committal "Oh!" Later on he said, "Well, on the whole it's rather better than I expected." I have a copy of this masterpiece in my library, but I have not dared to glance at its contents for at least fifty years.

Among the many people young and old, lively and severe, who made our lives varied at Clifton, only a few stand out now prominently in my memory. Putting aside for the moment the maidens who charmed me, I must mention first two, both of them women, and both of them already "of a certain age." Each of these ladies was unexpected, and each was the wife of an ecclesiastic. One was Mrs. Ellicott, the wife of the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol; the other was Mrs. Minto Elliot, the wife of the Dean of Bristol.

The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol lived, except when he was in London, where he had a large house in Great Cumberland Place, generally at the Palace, Gloucester, but he had another large house in York Crescent, Clifton, and dwelt there each year for several weeks in the autumn or winter. He was accompanied by his remarkable wife, and by his musical daughter, Rosalind.

Mrs. Ellicott was entirely unlike my youthful conception of what

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a prominent and immensely learned bishop's wife would probably be. Certainly she was important, and that fitted in with my conception of the typical wife of a bishop. But she was also, I believe, a born Bohemian. She was crammed with humour. She, I am quite sure, preferred the society of musicians, of actors, of actresses, of opera-singers, of writers, even of dancers, to that of the clergy. She herself was an accomplished singer with a fine contralto voice, and often during her long life sang in public. It is even on record that once Queen Victoria called her "that singing woman," with some disdain, though why even a bishop's wife should not sing I don't know.

Though Mrs. Ellicott was important, enjoyed her position and was fond of great people as well as of clever Bohemians, she was *au fond* the reverse of ecclesiastical, and she sometimes startled Clifton by being entirely unepiscopal. The clergy in general, I think, were rather amazed at her. Not so my father. Directly Mrs. Ellicott and he met each other they "clicked," to use a slang expression often in use at that time. Their common love of music was a bond between them. And so was their uncommonly acute sense of humour. Immediately they became friends, and I was lucky enough to be admitted also to friendship, young though I was.

The Bishop, a learned, aristocratic, highly refined and charming elderly man, with a curiously light voice and delightfully courteous manners, was totally unmusical. Miss Ellicott, their daughter, very like her father in appearance, on the contrary was as enthusiastically musical as her mother. She had a high soprano voice and sang often at concerts. She once sang in the great Colston Hall, and she composed songs, chamber music, and even cantatas, one or two of which were performed at big musical festivals. She was very ambitious and showed it. Her mother was even more ambitious—for her. I liked this. I even began to feel ambition stirring within myself. Miss Ellicott was determined to be a somebody. I realized that I, too, should like very much to stand out from the vast crowd of nobodies, and to be known for something. But for what? I supposed that it must be for fame as an organist. *The Coastguard's Secret* had not set the Thames on fire. I must work very hard at my music.

But I continued to dance, to go to concerts whenever there was a good one, to write verses, to play lawn-tennis, and to fall in love with first one girl and then with another.

The second lady who made a great impression upon me, a pendant to the delightful Mrs. Ellicott, who was later my good friend till she died, was Mrs. Minto Elliot, the wife of the Dean of Bristol. Her relation with the Dean was really peculiar.

He lived with his very characteristic daughter, Miss Elliot, in Clifton. Mrs. Minto Elliot lived in Italy, in Siena and Rome, and wandered

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and wrote. She wrote a series of quite popular books called *The Diaries of an Idle Woman*. They were laid in various countries. For she travelled. She was an heiress and had been married before she encountered the Dean, and had two daughters, one married to an Italian and one to a Spanish marquis. One was Marchesa Chigi, the other the Marquesa del Moral. Mrs. Elliot's first marriage had been annulled on her petition. I believe she carried the case to the House of Lords. What made her marry the Dean of Bristol, what made him marry her, I cannot conceive. She was totally unsuited to be the wife of any clergyman, much more of a Dean. She and the Dean never lived together. Miss Elliot was, I believe, not on speaking terms with her stepmother. When Mrs. Elliot came to Clifton she did not stay with her husband, though she visited him and called him "a very nice old man." The Dean himself scarcely ever appeared in his own cathedral, and, so far as I know, never set foot in the Deanery. It all seemed very odd. But Mrs. Elliot was well worth knowing, and of course my unusual father and she soon became firm friends, and, as in the case of Mrs. Ellicott, the friendship was extended by Mrs. Elliot to me. We were intimate friends till she died. And I had a real regard for her.

We met her first at a dinner in Clifton. She had dark hair, worn like Queen Alexandra's hair, penetrating observant eyes, a slim figure and aristocratic features. She was the first authoress I had known, and I was greatly impressed by her. At the end of the evening she told my father she must certainly come to our house. He invited her to dinner. She came. So the friendship began. My father called her "a most refreshing change" from the average Cliftonians we met. She was not only a woman of the world, she was a thoroughly worldly woman. She loved great people and knew many of them, and she had a passion for society that might, without exaggeration, be called rabid. She was clever and she was original. Neither Mrs. Ellicott nor Mrs. Elliot was like other people. Even as a boy I liked such original beings and wished I knew more of them. I had no idea then that later on I should meet and know a great many with world-famous names. Mrs. Ellicott gave musical parties, at which she and her daughter sang, and we went to them. Mrs. Elliot gave no parties in Clifton—she had no house there—but she went out whenever she was asked. She talked to me of Rome and of her daughter there, Marchesa Chigi, and said some day I must visit her there. I said I should be delighted, but secretly wondered whether I should ever set foot in Rome. Years afterwards I lived in Rome for two years, knew Marchesa Chigi and her daughter, Donna Daisy, well, and wrote a book about Roman Society.

Among the musical attractions of Clifton was a series of concerts of chamber music which were given in the smaller concert-room of the

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Victoria Rooms. Mr. Henry Holmes, an admirable violinist, was the leader of the string quartet. He lived in London and was principal teacher of the violin at the Royal College of Music there. He always stayed with us when he visited Clifton. He advised my father, when I was a little older, to let me study at the College of Music. Henry Holmes wore his hair in a sort of frizzy chignon which I thought intensely musical. He was a charming man, but eventually he got into trouble, owing to his very peculiar opinion on sexual questions, and lost his position at the College. It was a pity, as he had a very great musical talent. I once heard a symphony of his for orchestra played at St. James's Hall.

After we had lived happily in Clifton for about five years, and made a multitude of friends there, and my elder sister had refused two proposals of marriage, and I had finally fallen deeply and desperately in love with a charming and extremely musical girl, who played the violin really well, leading her two sisters in performances of classical chamber music but not professionally, a terrible blow fell on us. It was worse than the blow we children had reeled under in Kent. My father was offered a very good "living" close to Canterbury, and decided to accept it and to take up again parish work.

Sad we children had been to migrate to Gloucestershire; sadder still were we to migrate again and to go back into Kent.

I was now just on twenty, my elder sister was twenty-two, my younger sister eighteen. And I was madly in love with a girl who lived with her family in Clifton.

Driven beyond all reserve, I told her mother and father of my feelings. (I had already told her.) The reply was that both she and I —she was younger than I was—were far too young to think of marriage. Furthermore, it was explained to me that though I was a very nice boy the position of a church organist was not good enough for the girl in the eyes of her parents, who both belonged to well-known Scottish families. When she married she must do better than that. I had no money of my own, and as an organist could not expect to earn much in the future, even if I were fairly successful. They were very sorry indeed and had nothing against me, but the answer to my distracted suggestion must quite definitely be "No."

The charming girl—why, I don't know—never married, and I am still a bachelor. But I cannot pretend I have never loved again. To do so might perhaps give some of my readers a high opinion of my power of faithfulness. But I must stick to the facts. The blow was a hard one. I suffered acutely under it. But eventually I recovered.

London was waiting for me. Or was I waiting for London?

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III

I HAD already visited London on several occasions, to see a dentist called Mr. Rogers, and once or twice with my father to attend the performances of Mr. J. L. Toole, the comic actor, at "The Folly Theatre," later at "Toole's Theatre." As for foreign travel, we had been *en famille* more than once to Switzerland. And I had set eyes on Lake Leman, the Lake of Lucerne, the Diablerets, and a few other beauty spots. But my knowledge of the world was still rather limited, and London in its dark vastness was to me still a mystery. When I realized that I was to continue my musical career at the Royal College of Music in Kensington Gore I was thrilled but alarmed. This would indeed be a baptism of fire.

I was to have an allowance. It was small. But I should manage it myself. And I was to live in the wild freedom of London lodgings.

The lodgings chosen by my mother and myself were in Hornton Street, just off Kensington High Street and near to the church of St. Mary Abbots. Looking back down the vista of years, during which I have occupied several very delightful country houses in England and Switzerland, some nice London flats, two villas on Lago di Como, apartments in innumerable hotels, a peasant's house on a mountain in Sicily, a bungalow by the Nile, a house on the desert edge near Heliopolis, tents in the Sahara Desert, in the wilds of Morocco, among the mountains and valleys of Palestine, etc., etc., I see those first lodgings of unbridled liberty as frankly detestable. The sitting-room was small, badly furnished and on the ground floor. The bedroom, ditto, was on the first floor. The landlady was fat, old and greasy. The street seemed dark and dull. My mother departed to our new home in the country near Canterbury, and I was left to myself—with an upright piano to which organ pedals were attached.

On this I should practise organ music, and of course all my pianoforte music leaving the organ pedals alone.

I felt decidedly lonely and yearned for Clifton and the delicious girl from whom I was parted for ever.

Although her eldest brother was studying medicine in London and was a good friend of mine, I saw little more of her and nothing in intimacy. She never seemed to visit London and I did not return to Clifton, though once or twice, at long intervals, I went to Bristol to attend the musical festivals there and to greet my old master, Riseley, who directed them. But by that time I loved someone else. Her people, without knowing it, had dealt me a blow from which I did not recover. They had made me realize my folly in giving up Oxford for the sake of the organ. I had made a mistake. Perhaps, as I was only twenty, you may think that I could easily have rectified it. Why

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didn't I rectify it? I hardly know. Perhaps pride held me back. I had been so enthusiastic about the organ in Clifton. I had begged and implored my father to let me follow my bent. I had worked for three years or more at my music. I had agreed to go to the Royal College. Money had been spent upon me. Expectation had been aroused. I believe I was ashamed to confess that I had been a young fool. So I resolved to "make the best of it" and continue on the path along which I had begun to tread.

But what would it lead to? Only to a position which was not good enough for the girl I had wanted, and still wanted, to marry.

It was a bad business. But though I was very depressed I was also thrilled by this début in London, by my new liberty, and by my entry into the life of the Royal College.

But while I was there another blow fell upon me. Close contact with a number of highly gifted young musical students made me realize that I was not highly gifted in a musical sense. This certainly did not come upon me at once, and it did not spring from too great native modesty, or from what is generally called now "an inferiority complex." Later on, when I joined the London School of Journalism and met with students resolved on the writing career, I did not feel that I was inferior to them and had little chance of doing better than they could. On the contrary, I resolved to beat them and had the feeling that by working harder than they did I might be able to do it. At the Royal College I soon came to know that I was by no means a musical genius, although I was what is called "very musical." I loved music. I was intimately moved by it. I responded intensely to great music, and I think I had an understanding of it. I believe I might have been developed into a good, though not a great, pianist. But I had absolutely no talent for composition. And I had none of the love of publicity which is usually a factor in the "make-up" of anyone who aspires to be a professional pianist. As for the organ—what had happened to me in Clifton had turned my susceptible mind, and perhaps even my heart, against it.

Nevertheless I must go on, go forward, stick to it.

At the College the organ was to be my first study and the piano my second study. There were, of course, classes for harmony, for counterpoint, for general musical knowledge, etc., which I must attend. And there were lectures on the great composers to listen to and take notes about. And concerts were given by the students in the hall of the College, at which orchestral and chamber music was performed.

It is difficult to be certain now, after so many years, but I believe that while at the College I showed more natural talent for the piano than I did for the organ. For the piano I was handed over to the care of a most unusual being, Mr. Algernon Ashton. For the organ, after a period with Doctor Gladstone, I studied under one of the most

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brilliant men I have ever met, Sir Walter Parratt, the Master of the Queen's music and the organist of St. George's Chapel at Windsor.

Algernon Ashton looked like a big boy and was a wonderfully kind, genial and encouraging master. He had a peculiar mania. He delighted in visiting graveyards and musing solemnly by the tombs of the important departed. No great man's tomb that was within his reach, so to say, could be considered as safe from his pious visitations. He moved reverently, but with keen pleasure, among cemeteries. Connected with this mania was another mania—that of writing letters to the London papers. Probably some people, even now, can remember the perpetual short letters signed Algernon Ashton which appeared to warn the public that such and such a grave, of such and such a dead celebrity, was not sufficiently cared for and that something ought to be done about it. Not only famous musicians were honoured by his notice of their last resting-places. Scientists, novelists, poets, painters, singers, actors, historians, politicans, theologians, archaeologists—all were fish for which he cast his wide-spreading nets.

When not teaching at the College or visiting tombs he composed music assiduously. The list of his compositions was long. But I'm afraid he was never recognized as a composer. I never met anyone, except at the College, who had heard of him as a composer of music. If by chance you mentioned his name the comment would probably be:

"Oh, isn't that the fellow who is always writing letters to the papers about somebody's tomb?"

For some unknown reason his letters invariably got into print.

My lessons with him were always enjoyable. He took me through the Beethoven sonatas and a great deal of Chopin's music, including the polonaises, nocturnes, valses, mazurkas, and all the preludes. The études, most of them, were beyond me. But I learned three or four of the least difficult ones.

Something rather embarrassing to me happened in connection with Chopin's famous polonaise in A flat.

A woman doctor of medicine lived in rooms above my sitting-room when I was working on the octave passages of this polonaise, and one day she sent down the following message to me:

"Doctor—'So-and-so'—presents her compliments to Mr. Hichens. She is engaged in writing a medical book, and wishes to inform him that if he continues to repeat incessantly the same passage in the musical composition he is studying she will go mad."

I told Algernon Ashton of this and he said, "Poor dear soul! Give her a little rest and then go at it again."

I did give her a rest, until, the octave passages getting no better, he said,

"Never mind her medical book. You mustn't have your career spoilt by a woman you don't even know. Go at them again."

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I complied. This time no message came to me in writing, but a large elderly man, whom I afterwards discovered to be the lover of the woman doctor, descended the narrow staircase from the upper floor and expostulated with me in no gentle terms. He told me I was ruining the career of a great woman who was writing a book which would benefit the whole of humanity when it was published. What good did music do in comparison with the science of healing? Could I say that Mozart—

(Here I interrupted him with one word, "Chopin.")

Mozart and Chopin were all one! Could I say that Chopin, if it was Chopin—

(I pointed to the score on the piano.)

—Chopin, then, did any good to the world? If all the musicians in the universe were swept into limbo, who would be the worse for it? Nobody! But if the science of healing came to a dead stop simply because somebody was crazy about arpeggios—

("Octaves!" I interjected.)

Octaves and arpeggios were all one! Then the whole of humanity would suffer without release, and—

At this point in our agreeable intercourse there came a hearty thumping on the floor above us.

"She wants me!" he exclaimed. "But before I go"—he lifted a large hand in a warning gesture—"no more arpeggios!"

Although the fellow was evidently wickedly unmusical, and had no sense whatever of the requirements of the soul of man, which needs nourishment as much as the body, I was troubled by his visit and consulted a fellow-student of mine, Frank Deas, with whom I had become intimate, partly, perhaps, because he had no more genius for music than I had, although, like me, he was passionately fond of it.

"What on earth shall I do?" I said.

"Change your rooms," he said. "Come to Phillimore Place where I live. My landlord has two houses joined together. There are two nice rooms on the ground floor to let next to mine in the other house. Why not take them? They're incomparably better than these."

We went at once to look at them. They were more expensive than Hornton Street. I telegraphed home and wrote fully explaining the situation. Once more my kind father fell in with my wishes. In a few days I had left Hornton Street for ever. But whether the medical book which was to save humanity ever came out I know not. I did, however, succeed in mastering the octave passages, though I never played them with the astounding rapidity of a Sophie Menter.

I mention Madame Menter because at the time I am writing of she was one of the most famous of living pianists, and was the favourite pupil of Liszt, who played with her on two pianos when he paid his last visit to London. The power and brilliancy of her playing were

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astounding. When she travelled she always carried some cats with her in a basket specially made for them, and when she played in St. James's Hall the cats were there in the artists' room.

I stayed for a long while in Phillimore Place and had no remonstrances there because of my octave playing.

Sir George Grove was in command at the College of Music during my time there, and among those who lectured and taught there were Sir Hubert Parry, Sir Villiers Stanford, Sir Walter Parratt, Henry Holmes and Eaton Faning.

Sir Hubert Parry was delightfully genial and was much beloved by the students. He lectured to us on the great composers and taught composition. Villiers Stanford had his admirers and was very talented. But I don't think he was popular. He was very sarcastic and often said things that wounded. He conducted the College Orchestra.

Sir Walter Parratt became my master for the organ. He used to come up two or three times a week from Windsor, where he lived, always wearing the same pair of grey trousers; made, I thought then, of flannel. But perhaps I was wrong about that. He was tall and thin, with hair that reminded me, I don't know exactly why, of asparagus though it wasn't green. It seemed to me bristling with electrical energy. But Parratt seemed all energy, physical and intellectual. He was witty, impatient but never cruel, and a marvellous organist, though, I thought, less startlingly brilliant than Riseley. One habit he had which I dreaded.

My organ lessons took place in a quite small room, in which, of course, there was a good organ. Generally when I had to play, there were one or two other pupils there. I didn't mind them. But quite often, on coming in for my lesson, I would find some strange lady, perhaps a girl, perhaps not, or even two such critical beings, established in chairs behind Parratt's table, to assist at my performances. They were friends of Sir Walter. One, whom I remember well, was a Miss Ponsonby, one of the Ponsonby family so closely connected with Queen Victoria. Sir Henry Ponsonby was the best known of them at that time, and I think this Miss Ponsonby was his daughter.

"Now show these ladies what you can do!" Sir Walter would sometimes say.

And then my bones would turn almost to water.

However, I showed them—sometimes on the wrong notes.

To one who suffers from nerves, as I did, the organ can become an enemy. For when in a nervous condition, though the hands may not escape from control the feet, alas, generally do, and the result is not unlike chaos. I specially dreaded the organ examinations. On two occasions I was shut up in Sir Walter's room, with him, Sir Frederick Bridge, the organist of Westminster Abbey, and Sir Villiers Stanford, and had to play to them. It was a ghastly experience. But an even

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more ghastly experience befell me before I left Kensington Gore for ever.

Now and then, in the concert-hall of the Establishment, second-study concerts were given, at which the best of the second-study pupils were put through their paces before a crowd of professors and students, the severest critics a human being can have to sit in judgment upon him. And one day, when I came to take my piano lesson with Algernon Ashton, he informed me that at the concert of second-study pianists for that term I had been selected to perform, on his recommendation.

"No!" I exclaimed, horror-struck.

"Yes!" he smilingly replied. "And you are going to play a suite of Raff ending with a nice little fugue."

There was no escape for me. I must face it. Algernon Ashton told me that I ought to be pleased to be one of the selected. And now I must get ready to do justice both to myself and him. I tried to feel pleased. I prepared to get ready. But the many days before the date of the concert were for me days of torment. I practised the suite, of course, diligently, and I realized that I could master it. It was not too difficult for my second-study powers. But could I ever get through it before that awful crowd of professors and students?

Since then I have often talked with great artists about that question of "nerves"; with such famous people as Paderewski, Brailowsky, Madame Albani, Monsieur Cortot and others. Monsieur Paderewski once told me that in spite of his years of perpetual triumph he continued to feel nervous just before he walked on to the platform to begin his programme. The great Russian pianist, Brailowsky, on the other hand, told me that when he stepped on to the platform and saw a great crowd in front of him, he felt invigorated, happy, ready to do his best, and able to do it. One night at the Covent Garden opera, during the first performance of a new opera, the tenor who was singing a big duet with Madame Albani broke down. Afterwards, when I was condoling with Madame Albani, I said that I couldn't imagine how she managed by her complete sangfroid to save the situation (as much as it could be saved), and to be absolute mistress of her means and her part until the unfortunate tenor "came to."

"Have you no nerves?" I said.

"Plenty!" she replied. "But I could never break down or be made to break down by another singer; I study all I sing till I am *sure*."

Once, after a concert in Vevey, I was travelling to Paris and found myself in the company of that glorious pianist, Monsieur Cortot. To him, too, I spoke about nerves and said how extraordinary it seemed to me that he had such a prodigious musical memory and that it never failed him in public.

"But it does now and then," he said, slightly smiling.

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"I have heard you repeatedly in all sorts of music, but there was never the slightest hitch."

"Oh, it very rarely happens."

"But when it does?"

"I just have to stop for a moment," he said, without the slightest embarrassment.

Since then I have heard him again several times. Always the magic of his art seems to me greater than ever before. And never has his memory faltered.

I was not a Cortot or a Brailowsky; I was only a second-study pianist at the Royal College, and as the night of the concert drew close I felt a continual urge to purchase a ticket for Buenos Aires, or any other far-distant place where I knew nobody, and to hide myself for ever from the critical ears of musicians.

Students and professors! A terrible audience! But I had to go through with it, and somehow I got to the end of the suite without a breakdown and was once recalled to the platform. But as I played I scarcely knew what I was doing.

Perhaps I resembled Lord Charles Beresford, the famous admiral, who was also an aspiring politician. After a speech of his in the House another Member, commenting on it, said, "When the honourable Member rose to make his speech he didn't know what he was going to say, while he was making it he didn't know what he was saying, and when he sat down he didn't know what he had said." Much the same comment might probably have been appropriately applied to my playing of Raff at that students' concert.

After that night, although my appearance on a platform before a highly critical audience of musicians was not a fiasco, secretly I cherished the conviction that emphatically I had not been created for public life. Some people love the limelight and are uneasy unless they are shone on by it. I dislike it. If I have to make a strong effort I like to do it in private, and to let the result be known to people later on. Publicity does not help but only hinders any powers I possess. This conviction began to haunt me and I wondered about my future.

Very soon after I came to London I began in my spare time to write verses that I fancied might be suitable for a musical setting. I had become acquainted with a family of girls who lived not far from Hampstead and who were all very fond of good music. Their name was Harraden. One of them composed songs. I wrote a lyric called "If at your window," and sent it to her. She liked it and set it to music. A publisher bought it and paid me a guinea for my words. This fired my ambition. I wrote more lyrics, had them printed on leaflets, looked out the names of popular composers in a London address-book, and posted copies of my verses to them. I began to get answers. Many of my verses were accepted and music was written to

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them and published, and either the composers or the publishers paid me for them. In one year I earned over a hundred pounds for pocket-money. My verses were sung at a great many concerts. They were —let me confess it—terrible rubbish. But now and then I wrote something that was a little better than the rest. I met and fell in love with a girl in a small place up in the north who, later, developed into a talented musician. Inspired by her I wrote a lyric called "The Bird and the Rose." She composed music for it. We published it at our own expense, agreeing to share the profits. It sold for a good many years and we made some money.

There lived in London a popular Italian musician called Tito Mattei, a friend of Madame Adelina Patti, the world-famous opera-singer. I sent him a song called "A Kiss and Goodbye." He took it. Not long afterwards Madame Patti gave a concert at the Albert Hall and was announced to sing "A Kiss and Goodbye" there. Needless to say, I bought a stall near the front and sat in the midst of the crowd of thousands of people. The moment came for my verses to be sung by the diva. She sang. The applause was frantic. She and Tito Mattei were called again and again. When at last the encore had been given, and Madame Patti disappeared laden with flowers, a smartly dressed woman sitting next to me said to the man who was with her,

"Of course she sang it divinely! But what awful words!. Did you ever hear such contemptible rot before in your life?"

"Never!" was the emphatic reply.

I went home to Phillimore Place feeling chastened.

But I still went on writing verses. I translated some French poems into English verse for Mr. Blumenthal, fitting my words to his music already composed. My ambition at that time was to "cut out" the immensely popular verse-writers, Frederick Weatherly and Clifton Bingham, whose words for music were sung all over the British Isles. At the same time I worked away steadily at the College, and sat in cheap seats at all the best concerts. I scarcely ever missed the Saturday and Monday Popular Concerts in St. James's Hall, where I heard continually Madame Norman Neruda (Lady Hallé) and Herr Joachim, and many of the best pianists of the day, including the wonderful Madame Schumann, von Bülow, Janotha, and I suppose the best player of Chopin's music there has ever been, that marvellous little monkey and showman, von Pachmann. Once I heard Anton Rubinstein give a recital and I have never forgotten it. He was a Titan and played like a creature inspired. Mr. Arthur Chappell escorted Madame Schumann reverently on to the platform. She sat down with quiet dignity, removed her rings, and played like the *Grande Dame* she was. Twice I heard Schumann's piano quintet played by her, with Norman Neruda, Joachim, Strauss and Piatti. I also several times heard Norman

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Neruda and Joachim play Bach for two violins. Much later on I heard Herr Henschel sing with his gifted wife, playing all the accompaniments himself. And I went as often as I could into the gallery of Covent Garden opera-house, where I heard all the stars in opera.

The delightful little composer, Grieg, came once when I was in London to give concerts with his delightful little wife, and of course I was there to see and to hear them.

My father said to me, "What are they like?"

I remember replying, "Like two dear little Shetland ponies."

I heard the great tenor, Sims Reeves, then so old that he took his top notes with his remarkable eyebrows. And how the crowd applauded the eyebrows! They absolutely believed they had heard the top notes.

And for a long while I went on studying the organ and secretly feeling sure that I should never become a good organist.

After the great Sims Reeves had retired several times, and popped out again for a last farewell, he at last made up his mind that his voice must be given a final rest, and that he must whisper in public no more. He announced this terrible fact in the newspapers, and that he would say goodbye for ever at the Albert Hall in an evening concert. He also announced that the great opera-singer, Madame Christine Nilssohn, long since married to a Spanish grandee, and devoting most of her luxurious leisure to gambling at Monte Carlo wearing a black bonnet with white strings, had consented to travel to England and to sing once more in his honour. Naturally every seat was sold in the twinkling of an eye. But I got one quite near to the platform. I felt I must hear the great Nilssohn.

That was really a memorable concert.

Towards the end of the first part of the programme Madame Nilssohn came slowly on to the platform amid a wild roar of welcome, looking simply magnificent, like an Empress from the North. I forget how she was dressed. But I well remember it seemed to me that since I had seen Lady Miles at the Clifton Ball I had never set eyes on a more superb-looking creature.

Her self-possession was tremendous. It amounted almost to insolence. With a sort of inflexible and glittering coolness she surveyed the vast audience, and before she had opened her lips to sing she had completely dominated everyone in it. (Only years after did I see an exhibition of such instantaneous domination. And that was given by a man, Chaliapine, the great Russian singer.)

When at last the applause died down—she did not seem to care much about it—she sang the Jewel Song from *Faust*. Her voice was still very fine, though possibly a little rough at the edge from lack of usage. In the second part of the concert she sang again, and the audience refused to let her go. And then at last she did a wonderful

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thing. She went to the piano, sat down at it, and, without removing her gloves, sang Swedish songs accompanying herself. That was the *clou* of the evening. Dear Sims Reeves was forgotten. A magical woman held us in thrall, a *belle dame sans merci*. But who wanted mercy from her? We were all at her feet and wanted to stay there.

Many years afterwards I saw her more than once in the gambling-rooms at Monte Carlo, wearing the famous bonnet. She was sometimes very quarrelsome there and accused people of snatching her winnings. She never accused me. I couldn't snatch, even if inclined to, for I never played. Like the Jersey Lily of an after-time, she faded in Monte Carlo.

Although I worked so hard, and went to so many concerts, and also frequented the theatres, sitting always in the pit, after a long wait in the street outside and a fierce scramble to push my way into the narrow entrance with the crowd, I found time to taste London, which laid upon me a heavy, almost narcotic spell.

At this time, while I was at the College of Music, I led, I suppose, a rather Bohemian life. I had very little money, though I was never in my life actually poor. That is, I never suffered from poverty, always had plenty to eat and plenty to wear, never heard the wolf howling outside my door. I was completely unknown, the country and Clifton boy come to London. Apart from my student friends, and their friends, and a few chance acquaintances, mostly quite unimportant, and three or four people I had known in Clifton who, like myself, had come up to study or to earn their living in London, I knew very few people. But I can't say that I felt upon me the curse of loneliness. My Scottish friend, Frank Deas, lived next door to me. Students fairly often dropped in. In day-time I was much at the College, surrounded by girls and young men, and even by boys. (Landon Ronald, afterwards a noted conductor, composer, and the Director of the Guildhall School of Music, was one of them.) Nevertheless, even in those young days I was often conscious of the strange melancholy that lurks at the heart of almost every great city, and that is certainly not absent from London. I loved London then and for many years afterwards, but I was very conscious of its melancholy. Although at that time I had never lived for long in the lands of the sun, had never been to the South of France, to Italy, to Africa, I was sometimes oppressed by the darkness of London, felt it almost as a weight lying upon me. But in spite of this very strong consciousness of darkness, very often I wandered about London at night, seeking as it were darkness in the darkness. And I wandered alone.

Where did I go? Anywhere! Everywhere? No; London is so vast that to go everywhere was impossible. I wandered mostly about the West End, about the streets and the squares and the parks. (Later,

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after a warning I received from a man of the world who was a good friend to me, I never set foot alone in any London park after nightfall.)

During these wanderings often I felt a desire to write something about this vast dark city, full of human beings I did not know and should never know, in whose faces, flitting by me in the night, I tried to discern something of their characters, their emotions, the way of their lives. Now and then someone addressed me, but I was timid of the approach, suspected nameless intentions, and hastened on without making any reply.

What are called "the upper classes" of London at that period of my life interested me not at all. I was under the fascination of the obscure, the doubtful, the difficult, the tragic. An immense curiosity about the under-life of all these night-birds obsessed me. I longed to know more—really I knew nothing—much more about them, and yet I felt that owing to my birth, my bringing up, my conventional traditions, I should never be able to get on with them. They would never surely unbosom themselves to one of my type. Always, however, the urge to know more, and to write of what I knew, grew in me. And many times I wished that I had not been so foolish as to dedicate my life to the organ. I remembered that I had written a book, *The Coastguard's Secret*, which already I thought of as absurd. I wished I could write another, quite different, much better, dealing, instead of with a tiny place by the sea in a sea-bound county, in great detail with a crowded city. In spite of my ignorance of the complex life of London I began to long to write about it.

I made no attempt to do this until, I suppose nearly ten years later, I sat down to write *Flames*.

Similarly, later on, I was haunted by the longing to write a book about the African desert, and again had to wait to do it until at last I felt ready, and then wrote *The Garden of Allah*.

Meanwhile for the first time I began to read some Balzac and marvelled at the genius with which he wrote about Paris. He knew Paris. Should I ever get to know London in such a wonderfully intimate way? But genius divines so much that it never learns.

About this time I discovered a place of enchantment. Don't laugh at me! It was the Promenade of the Empire Theatre in Leicester Square, where in those far-off days great ballets were the chief entertainment. One could buy a cheap ticket for the Promenade, which was upstairs behind a great semicircle of seats. There one strolled about, or merely stood watching the ballet and hearing the music played by an excellent orchestra. The company in the Promenade was—shall I say varied? And there were a great many girls and women whose profession was unmistakable.

Often I spent my evenings at the Empire Promenade watching the

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ballets and, with equal eagerness, watching those who sauntered, or stood, all the evening as I did. When I was a good deal older I saw there many times the great ballet of *Monte Cristo*, and wrote an elaborate description of it in my notebook. And eventually, in *Flames*, I wrote again, in another way, of the Empire ballet. This led to a suggestion from Lord Burnham, the proprietor and director of the *Daily Telegraph*, who asked me to call on him at his office in Fleet Street, and offered me two thousand pounds a year to join the staff of the paper. But that came about when I was over thirty. Now I was only a first-study organ student at the Royal College.

I stuck to my musical studies, and continued to write lyrics for musical settings, and felt ever more strongly the longing to be a writer instead of a professional musician. I even wrote the words of a Cantata, and had the *toupet* to send it to Sir Hubert Parry, a great gun at the College and a famous composer, whose works were given in London and at the musical festivals which are such a feature of English musical life. He must have been amused at what he perhaps considered my boyish impudence, for he indicated to me, with smiling irony, that I seemed to have mistaken my vocation.

"I'm afraid I can't consider you as poet or literary man. I advise you to stick to your music and to leave literature to get on as best it can without you."

A few years afterwards I was writing articles on his music in the columns of the London *World*, having succeeded Mr. George Bernard Shaw as recorder of musical activities on that paper. I never heard what Sir Hubert thought of my capacities in that rôle. Probably not much. But there I was; telling the public the impression his music had made upon me.

Fortunately I admired a great deal of it, especially his "Job," the first performance of which I attended at the Gloucester festival.

Well, Sir Hubert returned my Cantata and I believe I destroyed it. At any rate, I never showed it to any other unfortunate.

Gradually I got to know a few more people in London, and at last an important evening arrived when, as a writer of lyrics for music, I received an invitation to an evening reception given in Piccadilly by a so-called Literary Society named "The Salon." I was told that many "celebrities" would be there, and that, if I went, I should be presented to "well-known authors."

Needless to say, I put on my hitherto, in London, seldom-worn evening clothes, a high collar and white tie, and turned up at the appointed hour bristling with expectation. (I believe I even wore a pair of white kid gloves with which to make a suitable impression on the celebrities.)

There was a goodly throng, many of them looked important.

The lady who had asked me, a hard-working journalist, who wrote

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what was called "social gossip" for two or three papers devoted to the supposed interests of women, pressed my arm as a thin woman with a huge mass of untidy dust-coloured hair passed by towards the buffet.

"That's the famous shaver of Poodles!"

My eyes followed this personage with reverence.

Other great people turned up. Among them was a lady who wrote under the name of "John Strange Winter," and had produced an extremely popular book with the high-sounding name of *Bootles' Baby*. I was presented to her, and she received me kindly when my hostess had murmured that I was the famous writer of words for music and was already giving cause for anxiety to Mr. Frederick Weatherly and Mr. Clifton Bingham.

Helen Mathers, too, was there. She was a popular rival of Miss Rhoda Broughton and had written a terrific best-seller called *Coming through the Rye*. She was married to a well-known doctor, had reddish hair and walked with a very tall ebony stick, which I believe had floating ribands tied to it.

I was also presented to her, and she too was very affable.

Both she and John Strange Winter very kindly invited me to parties later on, where I met other "celebrities."

A funny incident took place at the Salon.

The world-famous throat specialist, Sir Morell Mackenzie, came once to an evening given by its members. While he was there an ample lady, with whom he was not acquainted, came up to him impressively and said,

"Sir Morell, I am a member here, and wish to know you and to be known to you. I am John Strange Winter."

Seeing a woman before him, and having never heard of this pseudonym, Sir Morell could not imagine what was meant, and said, "I beg your pardon. I don't understand you!"

"I say *I* am John Strange Winter."

"I really don't understand."

"Good gracious! I am Bootles!"

"Really I am at a loss to—"

"I am Bootles! I am Bootles' *baby*!"

The great surgeon turned and mixed hurriedly with the crowd. Coming upon a friend he said, "I've just met a lunatic who's got in here."

"A lunatic! Impossible! What sort of lunatic?"

"A woman. First she told me she was a man. Then she told me she was a Bootles—whatever that is! And finally she asserted that she was a baby belonging to Bootles. Undoubtedly a madwoman!"

I went to the meetings of the Salon two or three times, but I felt out of place there. I could not help seeing that most of the members were second-rate people and full of pretension. I hated being spoken

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of as "the famous writer of lyrics for music" when I knew that I was a nobody, and that the verses I wrote were utter rubbish, unworthy of the slightest consideration by anyone who knew anything about poetry. I made a little pocket-money by them, and that was all that could be said for them. But I met two or three people at the Salon who invited me to their houses, and gradually I began to know a few journalists and genuine writing people. And my ambition to be a writer increased.

Among the many students I met and knew fairly well at the Royal College were some who were, musically, highly gifted, and a good many who were no more gifted than I was. These last were generally, I noticed, interested in matters which had no connection with music, while the others often seemed to care for nothing intellectual that lay beyond the realm of music. Literature, architecture, painting, poetry, meant nothing to them. Only in connection with music did they seem to come thoroughly alive, apart from the sportive and jesting moments in which all average young people show a certain vitality. They were not even interested in the news of the day, in what was going on in the world, if it had nothing to do with music. I was often amazed at their indifference. But I was almost equally amazed sometimes by their musical gifts. Musically they outdistanced me with consummate ease. Yet, speaking generally, how uninteresting they were. The best friends I had at the College were not musical geniuses. One eventually became a Jesuit priest. Another became an architect. Two or three more, like myself, abandoned a musical career for something else. We were not good enough for musicians, though we were musical. I can honestly say that I have had more intimate pleasure, I might almost say joy, from music than from any of the other arts. But my gift for it was small, and at last I became so painfully conscious of this that I felt I must speak to my father about it, and ask him to let me leave the Royal College, give up studying the organ and piano and try something else.

But what? The question put to myself, the answer was there immediately. The career of a writer. That was now what I longed to embark on. My whole being urged me towards the terrible career.

But it was difficult after giving up Oxford, and being taken away from Clifton College on account of my passionate enthusiasm for music, to go to my father and say that I wanted to give it up.

I hesitated for a long time, though I was not at all afraid of my father, but only afraid of surprising and distressing him, and of making him feel that he had made a bad mistake in allowing me to avoid Oxford and to take up the exclusive study of music. At last, however, I went down to our home in the country near Canterbury and explained my misgivings and desires.

I believe he was surprised. But I am not certain that he was. To

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the end of his life I never felt that I thoroughly knew my father's character. He was in many ways a most easy man to get on with, and almost everyone who met him seemed to feel his charm. Yet I don't believe he was easy to know. When I had finished speaking he was silent for two or three minutes and finally said,

"If you give up music, what do you think of doing? You must do something. What do you want to do?"

I said that I wanted to be a writer.

He remarked that wanting to be "a writer" was rather vague. What sort of writer did I mean? Did I want to try to become a journalist?

I said "Yes," not because I had thought the matter out but because I had to say something that would not seem too ridiculous.

My father looked at me meditatively.

"I have noticed that you have a very frivolous side," he then said. "You used to be very fond of pleasure. You remember the rage for dancing?"

"Yes," I said.

"And lawn-tennis?"

"Yes."

"I told you long ago that you would have to earn your living some day."

"Yes. You told me that I should never have more than five hundred a year of my own."

I noted that he avoided saying anything about that. (Afterwards I realized why. I am sure that his money matters were already not what they had been in the days of private saloon carriages, horses and dogs, carriages and dresses from Paris.)

"You will have to work and earn money for yourself," he said.

"I shall never be able to earn much as an organist."

"And who knows whether you can earn as a writer?"

"I feel I shall be able to—presently," I said, summoning up as much boldness and conviction as I could.

"Well, I must think it over. Once I had thought you might do well as a barrister."

This remark astonished me. "Did you?" I said.

"Yes. At Clifton our neighbour, Mr. Macpherson, who you know has had a splendid career as a barrister in India, spoke about you to me and told me he was sure you could do well in a legal career and that he could help you in it."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"You were so mad about music."

I said nothing. What good would it do to speak? Mr. Macpherson was a good friend, with whom I had played a great deal of lawn-tennis. Now he was out of our lives; but I wondered that my father had never

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mentioned his offer to me. Our difficult conversation ended by my father saying he must "think about it."

He did think, I suppose. Anyhow, at the end of the term at the Royal College he told me I could give up my studies there and that he had made up his mind to give me "another try."

"What try?"

"I am thinking of sending you to the London School of Journalism, presided over by a Mr. David Anderson."

My heart beat high.

"I must see him first. I'll tell you more about it later. If you go there you'll have to work really hard. We can't have you continually changing about from one thing to another. This time you must really make up your mind to try and make good."

"I shall try," I said.

And the conversation ended.

IV

Till my father spoke of it I had never heard of the London School of Journalism, or of its founder and director, Mr. David Anderson. Since our momentous interview my father had been up to London, had seen this personage and had evidently decided that he would "do." For one day, after I had said goodbye to the College, he told me that an interview had been arranged for us with Mr. Anderson, and was to take place on a certain day, when he would sign a contract by which I was to be bound to Mr. Anderson for a year's tuition, and would hand over to that gentleman a cheque for one hundred guineas. That done, he would go back to the country and leave me to the tender care of the new arbiter of my destiny. I should still go on living in my two rooms in Phillimore Place, next to Frank Deas, who had not yet left the College. He stayed on there for a long time, but eventually gave it up and went back to Scotland. When, many years later, I last heard from him he was living in Edinburgh. But he was still in London after I had published my fifth book, *Flames*. He was always a good friend to me.

The London School of Journalism was established in two upstairs rooms close to Fleet Street. The first room was large and was occupied by the pupils. In the second, inner room, Mr. Anderson was comfortably installed. We called it "David's Sanctum."

When my father and I arrived for that first interview the large room

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was crowded with young men, who nearly all seemed to be talking energetically as we walked in and asked to see the chief. The room was full of tables, inkpots, blotting-pads, manuscript paper, pens, exercise-books, note-blocks, dictionaries, books of reference, and other volumes. Some of the pupils were standing near the windows. Others were sitting in various attitudes of easy abandon. Only two or three, if I remember rightly, seemed to be at work, pen in hand, bent over foolscap. As we came in the talk stopped. There was dead silence and everyone looked at us. I noticed smiles upon several faces. These smiles, I thought, were as expressive as words. They seemed to be saying,

"Aha! Another victim!"

"Can I see Mr. Anderson?" said my father. "He is expecting me."

And he gave his name.

"Certainly, sir!" said one of the young men. And he opened the door between the two rooms and disappeared.

Almost directly he came back and said, "Please come in, sir."

We walked into the presence.

As we did so a very smartly dressed, rather short, good-looking, *soigné* and remarkably self-possessed man, not very young, yet with no look of old age, got up from an armchair by a writing-table, cigar in a beautifully manicured hand, and said,

"I am delighted to see you. Do sit down. I was expecting you."

"David," as the pupils called him among themselves, was invariably extremely well clad, and always looked to me as if he had recently emerged from a bath full of bath salts, after which he had been in the hands of a first-rate coiffeur. His well-shaved cheeks were rather rosy. His fine intelligent eyes were bright. His figure was firm and his boots were exquisitely polished. So were his manners. But he had one peculiarity which I noticed at once. He nearly always pronounced his *h*'s with a sort of peculiar care, which gave me the impression that at some far-off time of his life he had probably dropped one now and then, but had trained himself by long practice to get over that little difficulty. I don't believe during the year I was with him he ever actually dropped an *h*, but I often felt that he wanted to but valiantly resisted the inclination.

While he and my father talked amicably together he looked me over serenely and took thorough stock of me. And when the interview was concluded, the contract was signed, and the cheque passed across the table into his keeping, I am pretty sure he had already made up his mind about me. But though I stayed with him for a year he never quite definitely told me what he thought of me and my prospects in "literature."

My first private interview with David took place almost immediately after my father's departure leaving me in the big room with the

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crowd of young and semi-young strangers. He came in from his sanctum and said,

"Mr. H-ichens, I should like to have a talk with you if you are willing."

I sprang to obey the summons and was shut in alone with him.

A seraphic smile came on his rosy face as he motioned me to a seat and got down himself, gently adjusting a pair of perfectly creased trousers.

At this distance of time I cannot remember precisely all the words which then glided smoothly from his well-formed lips. But I remember a good many of them.

He began by telling me that he had been a highly successful journalist, and mentioned the paper on which he had been employed at a very large salary for a number of years. It was one of the greatest London papers, and later on I was offered a post on the staff of it.

He went on to say that as my father had been kind enough that morning to give him one hundred guineas I now had a claim on his attention.

"But," he added, "Mr. H-ichens, you are perfectly free. I shall not question you in any way. Every day you are at liberty to come to that room"—he extended an admirably shaped hand towards the door —"and to spend your day there doing, if you wish, absolutely nothing, like some of the other pupils."

"Oh, but Mr. Anderson—" I began, aghast.

He interrupted me, slightly raising his purring voice.

"Ink is there. Plenty of it. You will bring your own manuscript paper, etc., as all my young men do. But you need not put pen to paper for a year unless you wish to. On the other h-and, every day I shall be sitting h-ere, entirely at your service, ready to share the store of my journalistic knowledge with you should you desire it, ready to give you advice, ready to encourage you—but never to drive you, ready to draw out from you any journalistic gift with which the Creator of us all has endowed you. There is nothing about journalism that I do not know. I have written h-undreds upon h-undreds of leading articles, as well as descriptive articles of all kinds; on festivals, pageants, military exercises, racing, great funerals, great weddings, Royal processions, murder trials, divorce cases, political events, first nights, Academy private views, concerts, opera performances, art exhibitions—and so on! Nothing has escaped my purview. Nothing has proved impossible for my recording."

He paused for an instant, gazing at me serenely with his fine and shining eyes.

"H-ere I am! H-ere you can find me! H-ere you can consult me at any time—if you want to. If you don't want to, I shall not complain. You are your own master. Your future is perhaps supposed

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by your extremely intelligent father to be in my keeping. Actually it is in yours. Now you can join the other young men and I h-ope you will be h-appy with them. I like them and I believe they like me. Why not? Get accustomed to them on this first day. And from now on use me and such powers as I possess as much as you like—or not at all. That is my method. H-ere in this room is the source. You can drink from it, or not, as you like."

The unexpectedness of all this was so great that I joined the pupils not knowing whether I was horrified, relieved or merely amused. The permission to sit in the London School of Journalism for a year without doing anything, without putting pen to paper, without acquiring any knowledge of the journalistic career, or improving myself in any way for the future, staggered me. A kind of naked sensation came over me, mental not physical. And I must have faced all the pupils with the look of one partially dazed.

One of them, who seemed to be a little older than most of the rest, amiably came forward and took me in hand, telling me his name and giving me, one by one, the names of the others. I am almost ashamed to acknowledge that most of these names I have forgotten. The passage of the years has obliterated them from my memory. Some, however, whom I became eventually intimate with, had names that mean still something to me. During my year with David I met Metcalfe, Hillier, Ivo Vizard, Bernard Miall and Guy Beringer, and formed friendships with them that meant something. But with all the pupils I got on happily enough. I have no unpleasant memories of the School of Journalism.

One of the first things that struck me about them, taking them as a group of young men, was their happy-go-lucky penchant for what seemed to me to be idleness.

Having, as I thought of it, been a failure in music, I came to the school with the firm determination to be a success as a writer.

(I am glad to be able to say that this determination never left me, was never sapped in me by the general attitude of those with whom I worked—or didn't work, as the case might be.)

My father had more than once alluded to my inclination towards "frivolity." There was reason in what he had said. I was a frivolous boy, but from the time when I entered the School of Journalism I became an exceedingly hard and persistent worker, and put my heart into my work. And during almost the whole of my subsequent life, although I enjoy pleasure and gaiety as much as anyone, I think I can say with truth that work has always come first with me, been my predominating interest. Next to work I should put travel. But that came rather later, when money began to come in.

It would be untrue to say that the young men I was thrown with at the School of Journalism inspired me with any lust for work. Most

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of them seemed to me contented to take things very easily, and few to be really ambitious. I began with the determination to get my father's money's worth out of David Anderson, to take him at his word. He had said that my future was in my own keeping. He was right. He had told me I could use him and such powers as he possessed as much as I liked—I resolved to give him no rest. He had stated that here, in his room, was the source. I could drink from it. I meant to. I did. I was "at him" continually.

In his way he was certainly a brilliant man and must have been a first-rate journalist of that time; the time of George Augustus Sala, of Clement Scott, of H. D. Traill, of Beatty Kingston, of Moberly Bell, and others. He knew the ropes, and was quite willing to give of his knowledge. On one condition—you must want it. Otherwise he wouldn't bother about you. He was no driver. If you wished to be lazy he was quite willing you should be. I believe if all of us pupils had left him entirely alone he would have been contented to spend his days serenely in his sanctum, smoking good cigars and reading the new books and the papers.

Now and then, however, he lectured to us, and his lectures, I thought, were quite astonishingly brilliant. And after I had been with him for some time he had the whim to start a paper which the pupils could contribute to. That was a strange paper to be run entirely by men. It was called *Mistress and Maid*, and was sold in the London streets from door to door by a group of deplorable women, picked up by David I know not where, and paid, I think, by "results."

More of that later.

Every morning I arrived at the School punctually and sat down to work with enthusiasm. I had my appointed place at one of the tables and began at first by studying shorthand. I may as well say at once that I never went very far in it and that long ago I have entirely forgotten what I learned. Eventually I was able to take down a few words a minute, but I never made any real use of my paltry knowledge. I had no intention of being a shorthand writer, and I never, except on one disastrous occasion, dictated a piece of my own work to one. I have no gift for dictation. All I write I have to write with a pen. It may be laborious, but the pen seems to help my mind in some mysterious way. There are many authors who dictate their work. The best I know of is Mr. Winston Churchill, all of whose work is dictated. In his later years I believe Mr. Henry James also always dictated. But I much prefer his earlier to his later work.

David Anderson only arrived when most of us were already assembled, either working or making some sort of pretence of work. Beautifully dressed, he walked rapidly in, said "Good morning!" and at once retired to his sanctum.

Very often I followed him there and began to drink from the source.

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I asked him what I had better do. He gave me subjects to treat. He made me write articles, parodies, epigrams, criticisms of any plays I had seen, of any concerts I had been to. He sent me out sometimes to see some public event, such as a sports meeting, a procession, the changing of the guard at St. James's Palace, a football match. I attended the Law Courts a few times and heard several trials. These interested me tremendously. I got into the House of Commons, and once or twice into the House of Lords, and listened to debates, and then wrote something about them. I wrote what were called "Turn-overs" for the *Globe*, an evening paper which published every day an article of over a column which turned over the page. These I sent up to the *Globe* office and two or three were accepted, though most were refused. All I wrote was shown to David, read by him, criticized, amended. Other pupils, of course, wrote also, but I pestered David more persistently than most of them. One, however, called Hillier, worked really hard. I knew him well at that time, both in the School and out of it. But eventually we drifted apart, owing partly to my living a great deal out of England, and I do not know whether he ever made much of a career. He wrote one novel which I read in manuscript and found interesting, but I never heard of its being published.

One of the pupils, Guy Beringer, became my greatest friend. He belonged to a gifted family. His father, Oscar Beringer, was perhaps the most sought-after piano-teacher in London; his mother, a very clever and charming woman, wrote for the theatre; and his two sisters, Esmé and Vera, both achieved a great deal of success as actresses, one, Vera, as Little Lord Fauntleroy in the play of that name, and as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, the other, Esmé, in the part of Romeo.

Eventually Guy became a brilliant journalist and represented Reuter's Agency in Russia. He lived for years in Russia, and died prematurely—I should think worn out by hard work.

I was often invited to the Beringers' house in Hinde Street, close to Manchester Square, and met there several very interesting people. One was Mrs. Kendal, afterwards Dame Madge Kendal, the greatest actress England had, except one, namely Ellen Terry. The Kendals were great friends of the Beringers, and later I went to their house, came to know Mrs. Kendal well, and wrote for her a monologue called "Little Pictures of School Life," which she recited in public at St. James's Hall with a musical setting composed by Maude Valérie White, afterwards one of my most intimate friends.

My life at this time began to delight me. I was beginning to know some genuinely gifted people, I loved the work I was doing, and though, as yet, I had had no success in it, I had the feeling that possibly success might come some day. It began to seem to me that at last I had perhaps chosen the right path. The haunting feeling of having

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made a mistake, which had oppressed me at the College of Music, died away from me. When I think back I am surprised at my self-confidence, though it did not amount to self-satisfaction. How was I ever going to earn my living by writing? What was I going to write? Journalism no doubt, as David had done. I should be a journalist, and perhaps a successful one as he had been.

At the London School we all talked journalism. We were all of us intending to be journalists.

I still went on writing some lyrics for music. And presently I wrote a song-cycle and showed it to a composer who lived at Hampstead near the Harradens. Her name was Mary Carmichael and she was well known in London. She took my song-cycle, composed music to it, and it was given in public with a certain amount of success.

Then I turned to short stories.

This was brought about by David's astonishing intrepidity in starting the paper called *Mistress and Maid.* Why did he do it? What could have made him, such a clever man, believe that he and his set of young literary cubs could possibly make a success of such a totally unmasculine paper? I have often wondered since *Mistress and Maid* lived—and died. But at the time I was merely excited by the fact of his turning to me for stories. There was to be a short story in every number, and "I think you could perhaps supply most of them, Mr. H-ichens."

Now was my chance! I took it and laboured unceasingly at the writing of fiction—spurred on by seeing my efforts in print with my name attached to them.

The paper did not live very long, and all those stories had very short lives. But they were of use to me. I was told I must write them, and I found I could think of stories and could write them sufficiently well to interest some readers. I served an apprenticeship in their creation which gave me some confidence when eventually Mr. David Anderson graciously bowed me out of his life with the smiling remark,

"Now, Mr. H-ichens, I have done what I can for you. Let the world see what you can do for yourself."

That was rather alarming, and for the moment I felt helpless.

But that moment had not come yet. I had still to enjoy months of pleasant tuition, months of "learning to write."

Successful actors, I have noticed, nearly always wish to dissuade their sons, when they have any, from adopting the actor's career. (Sir Henry Irving was an instance of this, and both his sons became actors.) And I know that successful writers, when consulted by young aspirants longing to burst into print, generally throw cold water over them. They talk of the "terrible career." They point out what a struggle it is to get anywhere in it. They assert that very few writers can make a living by the pen, and that a good many of them, even when well known and apparently successful, have a profession of some kind and

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take up writing as a "side line." Mr. A. B. Walkley, for years the dramatic critic of *The Times*, was, I believe, one of these. George Meredith was "reader" for a big firm of publishers and had the opportunity of refusing, on their behalf, the publication of a book which became a world's best-seller. Since I have become known as a novelist a good many young people have asked my advice as to whether an entirely unknown writer stands any chance of making his, or her, way in the author's profession. I always answer:

"Yes, every chance, if he has a natural gift for writing, creative ability, inventive power, and—most important of all—enough character to work hard, to take infinite pains, and not to be daunted by refusals of his work."

Most of us have known refusals, have had the precious MS. returned to us, with or without compliments. As to the nonsense that is talked about the necessity of "having a name" before editors and publishers will look at you, a name has to be earned by good writing, by having something new to say, as it were, and knowing how to say it. A name has to be made. Every famous author has had to make his name. Character is the basis of success as a rule, combined with natural ability. I know a man who wished to be a successful writer—and believed he had enough gift to become one. He laboured with but little public recognition for something like eighteen years. But he kept on undaunted, and at the time of my writing this he has made a fortune by his books and plays and is adding to it with every year that passes.

Of course you can have a prosperous career as an author if you have ability, patience, determination, will-power and courage. And if, most important of all, you will avoid imitation of others as though it were the plague, and express only yourself in the way that is natural to you. Sincerity is the keynote of lasting success. Read what the great Tolstoy wrote about that in his book *What is Art?* But how many writers are insincere and only out to catch, if possible, what they think of as "the taste of the public." They deserve to fail, and though sometimes they make easy money they never gain lasting fame. A shining instance of a success gained by an unknown writer who wrote simply out of her heart was won by a member of the Harraden family whom I have mentioned as among my first acquaintances in London.

Beatrice Harraden and I often talked together about writing, and how we wished we could do something worth while, something that would please and touch the great world of readers. And some years afterwards Beatrice, an absolutely sincere girl if ever there was one, wrote and published that little world success *Ships that Pass in the Night*, one of the simplest books surely that ever was written. It is on record that King Edward the Seventh, who was popularly supposed never to

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read a book, did read Beatrice's little book and wept over it. Never was a book more like its author than *Ships that Pass in the Night.* When I read it I felt as if I could see Beatrice Harraden writing it.

Another instance of stark sincerity and simplicity conquering the great public was the prodigious success of the American book called *David Harum.* The author's daughter told me that her father, laid low by illness, wrote it merely to please himself, without thought of publicity or money-making. And she added, long after his death, that it began to sell directly it was published, and "nothing can stop it from selling." Sincerity again—combined, of course, with natural ability. A sincere fool must not hope to triumph merely because he's sincere.

While with David Anderson occasionally I got into print. One day he said to me,

"It's time you tried to write a parody."

I said I was willing to try, but what was I to parody?

"I'll find something for you," he said.

A couple of days later he showed me a poem by Clement Scott, which had been set to music by Isidore de Lara, at that time a tremendously fashionable singer in drawing-rooms. It was called "The Garden of Sleep."

"This is very sentimental," he said. "Turn it into absurdity."

I took it away and wrote a poem about mustard and cress, which I called "The Garden of Greens."

He liked it and said, "I'll give you an introduction to an editor who will probably take it."

And he handed me a card of introduction to a certain Mr. Moore, who was then running a weekly paper called *The Hawk.*

"Take it yourself," he said.

I obeyed, and in this way got to know the brother of the eventually famous George Moore, one of the finest writers of English prose of our time and an intensely painstaking novelist, never satisfied with even his best achievements.

My parody was immediately accepted, paid for and published in *The Hawk.*

I wrote two or three other slight things for this paper, and also two or three trifles for another paper called *Life.* And then came the days of *Mistress and Maid.* These kept most of us busy, for I believe the whole of the paper was written in the School of Journalism. Even the correspondence between critical mistresses and indignant maids, who considered themselves and their kind to be "put upon," flowed from the minds and pens of David's young men. We had great fun with these letters and roared with laughter over the invented fury of supposedly suffering mistresses and cruelly treated "generals," cooks, parlour-maids and between-maids. David was, of course, our editor

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and was very particular about "what was to appear in the paper." Week after week I thought out and wrote a short story, and all of these stories he "passed," though not without criticism and amendment. His criticism was eminently constructive, but he told me he had never written fiction himself, except, he added, with one of his pussycat smiles, "occasionally about public events. But every really good journalist has to do that." David was a cynic, but a smiling cynic. In years to come I was to know, and like, another hard-boiled but very attractive brother-cynic, also a journalist of sorts, but who had been in diplomacy and was a famous politician, Mr. Henry Labouchere.

Whether David really liked me or not I never knew. Always agreeable and gracious, he never showed the least gleam of anything like affection to me or to any other pupil, so far as I know. He was entirely detached. I never knew anything about his private life. I never knew what part of London he lived in. There was absolutely nothing about him to suggest that he had a heart. But he had a temper we all got to know by the way in which he treated the deplorable women who sold *Mistress and Maid* from door to door in the streets. They came in a dreary procession once a week to report upon sales, and then there were sometimes "Scenes" which I found very unpleasant. Several times I saw an unfortunate, battered, wretchedly dressed woman reduced to a flood of tears because David was dissatisfied with the results of the sales. These were almost invariably very bad. And eventually, after trailing along for a few months, *Mistress and Maid* gave up the ghost. It never had any real life in it, in spite of our vigorous efforts and my own flood of short stories. Nevertheless it was of some benefit to me. It proved to me that I had some small talent for the writing of fiction, and it encouraged my father to hope that possibly I might be now on the way to the success I had missed in music. He carefully read all my stories, and though he was by nature an exceedingly critical man he thought there was "something in them." David also told me I had better have "a good try at fiction" when I flew out of his cage. This I firmly resolved to do.

At last the day came when I must say goodbye to the School, though not to all the comrades with whom I was pleasantly intimate there. Some months before this I had changed my lodgings in Phillimore Place for rooms on the second floor of a house in Buckingham Palace Road, close to the Grosvenor Hotel and Victoria Station. In these rooms I lived until, when I was about thirty, I took a flat in the very Bohemian quarter of Shaftesbury Avenue close to Oxford Street, within easy reach of the British Museum, where I used to spend many hours each week, reading and working in the enormous library.

When I left the School I felt sad. It had been to me like a sort of home, and as I was very sociable I knew I was going to miss the daily companionship of my fellow-students. I felt therefore sad, but at the

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same time strangely free and excited. The time had come for me to earn my living. I still had an allowance from home, but I knew I should never be satisfied until I could drop it and live on my own earnings. When would that be?

I was in the twenties. I remember making up my mind that if before the age of thirty I did not succeed in gaining enough to provide entirely for my own wants, I should have to consider that again I had failed, as I had failed in music. And then what should I do?

My most intimate friends at this time were Frank Deas, Guy Beringer, Ivo Vizard and Hillier.

Guy I saw continually for years. He knew my family and stayed with us during two or three holidays, and I stayed with his family in the Isle of Man. He was with us in the Channel Islands, in Sark and Guernsey, where we had wonderful fishing at night. Vizard also met my family and I stayed with his at Lyme Regis. With Hillier I made more than one expedition to Cumberland, where we spent weeks in Eskdale, at Ullswater and at Seascale. With my father I had long ago climbed all the principal mountains of that beautiful region, and knew every lake, every valley, every tarn almost. Hillier was not a climber but he revelled in mountain scenery and knew the works of all the Lake poets. With Frank Deas I stayed more than once in a delicious village near Dorking, and gazed with reverence at Flint Cottage, the home of the great George Meredith, some of whose work I was beginning to know. I shall never forget the enormous, almost overpowering impression a first reading of his *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* made upon me. I still think it one of the most gloriously English novels ever written. Meredith understood England in a noble way and could draw an aristocratic Englishman better than any other living author. I saw him only once and thought he looked like a Shepherd-King. I should have been afraid to meet him, as I had heard terrible accounts of his satirical onslaughts on people who were not up to his mark.

Left to my literary self in Buckingham Palace Road, I got a ticket for the reading-room of the British Museum and used to go there on most days of the week as a city man goes to his office. I read and I wrote steadily. I sent articles here and there, and had them returned. I wrote a long essay on Millet, the French painter. No one would take it. I wrote two or three articles on authors I had met. One was on John Strange Winter and got me into trouble with her, and especially with Mr. Stannard, her husband. For he had once said to me, in a moment of confidence, "My clever wife writes the stuff that sells and I do all the dirty work for her and save her all trouble." I was foolish enough to quote him verbatim in an article which was accepted and published in a London weekly. The result was consternation on

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Mr. Stannard's part and indignation on the part of John Strange Winter.

What had I meant by "dirty work"? I ought to be ashamed of myself. I can't remember now whether I was ashamed or not. Anyhow, I resolved to be more careful in the future. Fortunately or unfortunately, I forgot this resolution when I wrote and published *The Green Carnation*, which brought down several invectives on my head, the most brilliant and searching of which was an article called "Young Dogs" from the pen of the famous essayist and novelist, Mrs. Lynn Linton. This was obviously a piercing arrow aimed straight at me.

After working hard for some time, going diligently to the reading-room of the British Museum, and writing articles and essays which met with practically no success, though now and then, very seldom, I got something published in some obscure paper, the first piece of real good fortune I had—apart from those awful lyrics for music—brightened my life.

At that time one of the principal monthly magazines, backed by Mr., afterwards Lord, Astor, who also ran the *Pall Mall Gazette*, was the *Pall Mall Magazine*. This magazine had two editors who worked together, Lord Frederick Hamilton, a son of the Duke of Abercorn, and Sir Douglas Straight. I came across this magazine, read it carefully from beginning to end, and was seized by a fierce ambition to become a contributor to it. Short stories were published in it, as well as articles of general and topical interest. The owner himself wrote in it from time to time and various brilliant people.

"I must and will get a short story into the *Pall Mall Magazine*," said I to myself. "How different this is from *Mistress and Maid*!"

But could I hope to get in there? I, a person utterly unknown! I, one of the unfortunates "without a name"! (For my lyrics counted for nothing. Indeed, I was by this time thoroughly ashamed of them.) Well, David had told me to "have a good try" at fiction. Now for it!

I sat down and eventually achieved a rather long short story. I called it "The Collaborators." I read and re-read it. And I thought it as good as some of the stories in the *Pall Mall Magazine*. But perhaps this was vanity. Perhaps those two formidable editors with titles might think very differently. Anyhow, I must have it typed. This I did, packed the typed manuscript up and sent it in to the *Pall Mall Magazine* office.

Some days elapsed, anxious days. Then I received a large envelope on which was stamped the name and address of the magazine. I tore it open. Inside was a formal typed note asking me to call at the office and ask to see one of the editors.

Needless to say, I obeyed the august summons and asked for "The

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Editor," giving my name and stating that I had been invited to call. My message was taken upstairs by a young man, who came down and asked me to follow him. I did so, and came into a large room where both the editors were.

(I felt very small, very unimportant indeed.)

Lord Frederick Hamilton, with whom I afterwards collaborated, was a delightful man, simply brimful of humour, as he showed later on in his extremely entertaining volumes of Essays. He received me cordially.

Sir Douglas Straight, who became one of the best and kindest friends I had in London, looked at me with penetrating eyes that evidently had seen much, and gauged much about human nature—understanding eyes. He, too, was kind.

"We both wanted to see you," he said. "We like your story, 'The Collaborators,' and are going to publish it. Sit down and we'll have a talk. Have you written much? We've never heard of you."

Nor had anyone else, except the negligible Philistines who loved English ballads like "A Kiss and Goodbye."

I explained that I was entirely unknown, had spent a year at the London School of Journalism, and wanted to make my way as a writer.

They listened sympathetically and Lord Frederick said, "You ought to get on. We'll publish this story as soon as possible. Meanwhile, why not write us another?"

I left that office walking like one in the seventh heaven.

Of course I would write another as quickly as possible.

This encouraging interview really gave me a great lift, I felt as if on that day I had started on my literary career, and by the time "The Collaborators" came out I had finished a longer, and I think much better story, called "Reincarnation, or The Return of the Soul." This, too, was accepted, and I believe made something of a sensation among magazine-readers, and drew to me some attention from editors. Then Lord Frederick said he had an idea for a weird Scotch story and would like me to collaborate with him in writing it. It must be a rather long one. He told me the theme. Its mystery appealed to me. We wrote the story together and it came out in the *Pall Mall Magazine*, and was liked. It was called "A Tribute of Souls."

But then came a curious setback for me.

Lord Frederick asked me for another rather long story, and I immediately wrote one called "The Cry of the Child." He had made an agreement to pay me eighty pounds for it. I tried to do my best and thought I had done it. But when Lord Frederick had read it he sent for me, and said he did not think it was up to my mark.

"Don't you agree with me?" he said.

I didn't, but said that perhaps he was right. It was difficult sometimes to judge of one's own work.

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"Well, I've agreed to pay for it," he said. "And of course I shall do so, unless you feel inclined to withdraw it. I don't insist upon this, but really I don't think it will do the magazine any good."

I said then that I would take back the story and would not accept payment. He thanked me cordially and we remained excellent friends. Later on I dined at his flat, and he came to a party I gave in a flat I had rented in Queen Anne's Mansions, Westminster. I bore him no malice. On the contrary; for I profited by his dislike of my story. From him I should have had eighty pounds for it. I sold it elsewhere almost immediately for a hundred. Profit to me twenty pounds, which came in very usefully in those early days.

From this time on I began to earn money for myself, but not very much. It came in at first slowly and precariously. Still, I felt that I was on the way towards the fulfilment of my ambition, to be entirely self-supporting by the time I was thirty. Many writers, I know, have managed to gain a good living long before that age. But I had lingered a long while over music and had then given up a year to the School of Journalism. And unfortunately, before this, and before I left Phillimore Place, I had been struck down by a terrible illness. It came upon me with horrible suddenness. I dined out with a friend at a restaurant and went on with him to a theatre to see Irving act. My host was Charles Powell, our friend from Speldhurst. When the play was just beginning I felt a slight but unwavering fixed pain in the pit of my stomach. It increased rapidly and did not cease for a moment. But I managed to remain till the end of the play and said nothing about it. I feared to spoil his pleasure.

I got home somehow and went to bed. But the pain increased rapidly and became so excruciating that at dawn I was obliged to send for a doctor. He came and said I had been poisoned. Peritonitis set in and I nearly died, being kept alive for several days on nothing but sips of champagne. I was ill for a considerable time and had to be taken out of London, and of course give up all work. My recovery was very gradual, and for many months after this attack I often suffered painfully from acute indigestion. But I was able to take up work again, and my tough constitution eventually pulled me through. Unfortunately, however, I had to put up a long and obstinate fight against rather delicate health, and eventually, when I was about twenty-nine and was beginning to get on fairly well as a journalist, I broke down completely and had to leave London. At the time I thought this was a disaster. It proved to be the contrary.

A specialist whom I consulted strongly urged me to take a sea voyage and to go to a warm climate for the whole winter. After a talk with my people it was decided that I should go to Egypt by sea

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thing. She went to the piano, sat down at it, and, without removing her gloves, sang Swedish songs accompanying herself. That was the *clou* of the evening. Dear Sims Reeves was forgotten. A magical woman held us in thrall, a *belle dame sans merci*. But who wanted mercy from her? We were all at her feet and wanted to stay there.

Many years afterwards I saw her more than once in the gambling-rooms at Monte Carlo, wearing the famous bonnet. She was sometimes very quarrelsome there and accused people of snatching her winnings. She never accused me. I couldn't snatch, even if inclined to, for I never played. Like the Jersey Lily of an after-time, she faded in Monte Carlo.

Although I worked so hard, and went to so many concerts, and also frequented the theatres, sitting always in the pit, after a long wait in the street outside and a fierce scramble to push my way into the narrow entrance with the crowd, I found time to taste London, which laid upon me a heavy, almost narcotic spell.

At this time, while I was at the College of Music, I led, I suppose, a rather Bohemian life. I had very little money, though I was never in my life actually poor. That is, I never suffered from poverty, always had plenty to eat and plenty to wear, never heard the wolf howling outside my door. I was completely unknown, the country and Clifton boy come to London. Apart from my student friends, and their friends, and a few chance acquaintances, mostly quite unimportant, and three or four people I had known in Clifton who, like myself, had come up to study or to earn their living in London, I knew very few people. But I can't say that I felt upon me the curse of loneliness. My Scottish friend, Frank Deas, lived next door to me. Students fairly often dropped in. In day-time I was much at the College, surrounded by girls and young men, and even by boys. (Landon Ronald, afterwards a noted conductor, composer, and the Director of the Guildhall School of Music, was one of them.) Nevertheless, even in those young days I was often conscious of the strange melancholy that lurks at the heart of almost every great city, and that is certainly not absent from London. I loved London then and for many years afterwards, but I was very conscious of its melancholy. Although at that time I had never lived for long in the lands of the sun, had never been to the South of France, to Italy, to Africa, I was sometimes oppressed by the darkness of London, felt it almost as a weight lying upon me. But in spite of this very strong consciousness of darkness, very often I wandered about London at night, seeking as it were darkness in the darkness. And I wandered alone.

Where did I go? Anywhere! Everywhere? No; London is so vast that to go everywhere was impossible. I wandered mostly about the West End, about the streets and the squares and the parks. (Later,

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after a warning I received from a man of the world who was a good friend to me, I never set foot alone in any London park after nightfall.)

During these wanderings often I felt a desire to write something about this vast dark city, full of human beings I did not know and should never know, in whose faces, flitting by me in the night, I tried to discern something of their characters, their emotions, the way of their lives. Now and then someone addressed me, but I was timid of the approach, suspected nameless intentions, and hastened on without making any reply.

What are called "the upper classes" of London at that period of my life interested me not at all. I was under the fascination of the obscure, the doubtful, the difficult, the tragic. An immense curiosity about the under-life of all these night-birds obsessed me. I longed to know more—really I knew nothing—much more about them, and yet I felt that owing to my birth, my bringing up, my conventional traditions, I should never be able to get on with them. They would never surely unbosom themselves to one of my type. Always, however, the urge to know more, and to write of what I knew, grew in me. And many times I wished that I had not been so foolish as to dedicate my life to the organ. I remembered that I had written a book, *The Coastguard's Secret*, which already I thought of as absurd. I wished I could write another, quite different, much better, dealing, instead of with a tiny place by the sea in a sea-bound county, in great detail with a crowded city. In spite of my ignorance of the complex life of London I began to long to write about it.

I made no attempt to do this until, I suppose nearly ten years later, I sat down to write *Flames*.

Similarly, later on, I was haunted by the longing to write a book about the African desert, and again had to wait to do it until at last I felt ready, and then wrote *The Garden of Allah*.

Meanwhile for the first time I began to read some Balzac and marvelled at the genius with which he wrote about Paris. He knew Paris. Should I ever get to know London in such a wonderfully intimate way? But genius divines so much that it never learns.

About this time I discovered a place of enchantment. Don't laugh at me! It was the Promenade of the Empire Theatre in Leicester Square, where in those far-off days great ballets were the chief entertainment. One could buy a cheap ticket for the Promenade, which was upstairs behind a great semicircle of seats. There one strolled about, or merely stood watching the ballet and hearing the music played by an excellent orchestra. The company in the Promenade was—shall I say varied? And there were a great many girls and women whose profession was unmistakable.

Often I spent my evenings at the Empire Promenade watching the

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from London and not come back till the late spring. My very kind mother helped me to go by giving me a sum of money. And I sailed from London on a P. & O. steamer prepared for a fortnight at sea.

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In the course of my life I have made many voyages. Unfortunately I detest them. Sometimes I am not ill. I have been to America and back without a qualm. And I have never been ill in crossing the Channel even on a very rough day. But give me time, a bad sea and an unsteady ship, and I am capable of prodigies in the way of sea-sickness. My old friend, Reginald Temple, could bear me out in that, for we went to the West Indies together once, and on the outward trip, owing to quarantine regulations, we did not go ashore for sixteen days. Returning we carried a cargo of guano which was stored under an open hatch just by our cabin. I need say little more. On both trips I surpassed myself in orgies of blatant misery.

The voyage from England to Egypt in those days took approximately fourteen days. I shared a cabin with an extremely frosty Anglo-Indian official returning to India after being on leave, and an almost idiotic boy of sixteen or seventeen, who had nothing to do with him. The official looked with obvious disfavour on both of us, and never spoke to me outside of our cabin. I remember his name but need not print it. I was frequently told afterwards that he was "a very able man." I can quite believe it. He was certainly able to be disagreeable. But no doubt I tried him sorely during the first few days of the voyage. Later I cheered up and began to take some human interest in life. But even when I am perfectly well a voyage at sea bores me painfully, and I hate being always closely surrounded by people I don't know, and not being able ever to "get away" from the steamer. Always I go aboard ship in a spirit of resignation that can only be called dreary, and land at my destination with energetic delight and anticipation.

We stopped at Port Said and I went ashore. This was nearly fifty years ago. And Port Said was a hole of sordid, scrubby, wholly unattractive wickedness. Or it seemed so to me after a brief scamper round it and refusals of the many proposals that were pressed upon me by unknown ruffians. The passage by night up the Canal to Ismailia, on the other hand, enchanted me, and I was up practically all night surveying the mystery of the desert on either side of the ship.

I disembarked at dawn in Ismailia. And I have never forgotten the

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impression the gradual coming of light, African light, among the silvery sands and the palm trees made upon me. I had never seen, or even imagined, anything quite like it before. On that first morning I made a silent vow to visit Africa as often as possible during the rest of my life; and I have kept it.

From Ismailia I took a train to Cairo, and no sooner had I arrived there than some extremely kind connections of an aunt and cousins of mine took hospitable possession of me, and made me come to their apartment to spend my first days with them. Afterwards I stayed at Shepheard's Hotel, at the Ghesireh Palace Hotel, at Mena House, and in hotels at Louxor and Assouan.

My host in Cairo was a high officer in the British army in Egypt, and his wife was indefatigable in showing me the sights and introducing me to various people. In my opinion Cairo was far more worth seeing then than it is now that it has been thoroughly cleaned up, the fish-market done away with, and almost every trace of anything that might recall the Arabian Nights Entertainments ruthlessly abolished. Go to Fez if you want to taste something of the flavour of long-ago days, don't go to Cairo. It has been cruelly spoilt by Europe. But fifty years ago it held enchantment for me. I can still have happy days there and enjoy life in Egypt. But the magic of Cairo at night, which I described with some detail in one of my earliest books, *An Imaginative Man*, has vanished, no doubt for ever. Fortunately the wonderful antiquities of Egypt can't be abolished, though Philae has been ruined, and modern Egypt has so many attractions that a few years ago I chose it as a place of residence, and rented for six years a house on the edge of the desert close to the former home of Mr. and Lady Anne Blunt, who were living not far from Heliopolis during this first visit of mine. I saw them one morning galloping on Arab horses when I was donkey-riding near what is now the Almaza Aerodrome. Mr. Blunt wore a flowing burnous, and the cavalcade went by me in a cloud of dust. It was only later that I read and appreciated his poetry, and understood more intimately his fighting audacious spirit. Lord Cromer was then installed on the banks of the Nile as British agent, and the quarrelling between the Khedive and him, if it may be called that, was in its infancy. Kitchener, afterwards Lord Kitchener, was the Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, and the English influence was exceedingly strong.

A Coptic Egyptian, a great friend of mine, said to me not very long ago,

"Ah, those were the great days in Egypt!"

His voice sounded to me regretful. If Mr. Blunt had been still alive and had heard his remark I don't think he would have agreed with it. But he and Lord Cromer did not see eye to eye.

The first time I set eyes on Lord Cromer was at some races in Cairo, or near Cairo. By that time I was installed at Shepheard's Hotel,

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where every night an immensely tall and smart-looking young man walked round among the tables in the dining-room and asked us if we were satisfied. This young man long afterwards was often called "the uncrowned King of Egypt." His name was Baehler. Who that knows Egypt does not remember him? He became an hotel potentate and when he died left a great fortune. He was a remarkable example of what used to be called "a self-made man." After I settled in my desert home outside Cairo I often saw him. Though he was very rich, a racehorse owner, a millionaire, the arbiter of the destinies of Shepheard's Hotel, the Hotel Continental, the Semiramis Hotel in Cairo, the Mena House Hotel at the Pyramids, the Louxor Hotel and the Winter Palace Hotel at Louxor, the Cataract Hotel at Assouan, as well as of the marvellous King David Hotel at Jerusalem, he went on ceaselessly working. I cannot remember ever being even for an hour or two at Shepheard's Hotel without coming across him. And even when one went up the Nile he was almost sure to turn up there, if only for a day and a night. Nor did I ever go to the weekly race-meeting without seeing him there watching the performances of his horses. An extraordinary man, a man of almost volcanic energy, work seemed to be his passion. Nothing of the slightest importance happened in any of his hotels without his knowing of it. He died in harness, I believe.

At the first race-meeting I ever attended in Egypt I was in the midst of the crowd near the stand when I heard someone say,

"Here comes Cromer!"

I pushed my way a little nearer to a place where I noticed that all heads were turning, and saw an open carriage drawn by a pair of fine horses drive slowly by. In it were two people. One was the great man wearing a white top-hat. By his side, on the left of the carriage, sat a young man, indeed almost a boy, fair, aristocratic, even poetic-looking I thought. I did not know who he was and no one told me. Later I learned that he was Marquis of Queensberry's son, Lord Alfred Douglas, and that he was paying a visit to Lord and Lady Cromer.

Not long afterwards I had the pleasure of meeting him, and getting to know him well, for when I had been up the Nile for the first time, travelling in one of the luxurious steamers run by Thomas Cook, he was staying in the Louxor Hotel, which was crowded with English people, and I made a long stay there too. But before that I made a friend in a rather curious way, whose friendship I greatly valued and retained till it was ended by death.

When our steamer tied up at Louxor it was late afternoon, and I went ashore alone to take a stroll by the great river, and to see the sunset and the afterglow in the sky beyond the Libyan mountains. Tied up near our steamer there was a large private dahabeeyah, which I passed on my walk, and I had not gone far from it when I met two ladies who, like myself, had come out to enjoy the sunset. One of

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them was a girl, the other an older woman. They were going towards the dahabeeyah. I glanced at them casually and went on my way.

On the following day the crowd of travellers on my steamer started off early to visit the Valley of the Kings, but I did not go with them. I knew I was presently going to stay for some weeks in Louxor, and preferred to visit the famous valley in a way more peaceful and less vociferous. I was tired by this time of hearing the travellers around me exclaiming, "Dear me! What extraordinary people those ancient Egyptians must have been!" I wished to have a few hours alone.

On the deck of our steamer there stood a piano, and presently I sat down before it and began to play some pieces by Chopin which I knew by heart.

For a good while nobody interrupted me, but presently I was aware of the arrival on board of a youngish man, who at first stood rather near me, and then sat down in a deck-chair to listen. For a little while I played on; then I stopped, got up from the piano and was going away when the stranger also got up and said,

"Forgive me for listening. I heard you from Lord Waterford's dahabeeyah. It's tied up over there."

And he pointed. I made some remark and we entered into a short conversation, at the close of which he said,

"Do you ride on horseback?"

"Yes," I said. "Why do you ask?"

"I thought of going for a ride. Won't you come with me?"

"I haven't got a horse," I said, rather surprised.

"I'll get you one. It's a grand day for riding. But have you got riding kit?"

"Yes," I said.

"Then what do you say?"

After a moment of hesitation I said I would come. The man told me his name and that he was travelling with the Waterfords as Lord Waterford's doctor. I told him my name. He set off to find horses and I went to my cabin and put on my riding things.

When I presently returned to the deck I saw the stranger reappear. He was mounted on a calm-looking white horse, and led by the bridle a bright chestnut stallion of fiery, even febrile appearance. Which animal was for me? I was not left long in doubt.

"I've found a wonderful arab for you!" cried the doctor. "A much better one than my horse!"

"A bit too wonderful, perhaps!" I thought.

But I didn't choose to show the white feather, and I mounted the chestnut, which felt like a mass of quicksilver under me. (Or so I imagined.) And we set off into the desert.

I have not forgotten that ride. Never before had I been on such a difficult horse. It was terribly nervous and seemed to be in a per-

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petual fever. When dogs ran out and barked at our heels, invariably it tried to bolt. I rode it on the curb and managed to control it, but I never had a moment of peace on its back. Luckily, however, I had not forgotten how to ride in spite of the years I had passed without riding in Clifton and London, and when at last we turned back towards the Nile the animal quieted down a little and I began to feel I was its master.

As the river came in sight my companion said,

"Lord and Lady Waterford want you to come and lunch on their boat. Will you come?"

"But do they really want me?" I said, rather doubtfully.

"Yes, they specially told me to invite you."

"Many thanks. Then I'll come!" I said.

And we galloped up to the dahabeeyah, the pace being set at that moment by the doctor. Our arrival, I noticed, was observed from the deck of the dahabeeyah by four ladies and a man who lay on a chaise-longue.

We dismounted. A native groom who was waiting on the bank took charge of our steeds and I was taken on board and presented to Lord and Lady Waterford, to their two daughters, Lady Susan and Lady Clodagh Beresford, and to Miss Reiter, who was travelling with them as a companion. Miss Reiter and Lady Susan were the ladies I had met on the previous evening watching the afterglow on the Nile.

We all lunched together, and afterwards went to see the donkey, gamoose and horse races, at the race-course of Louxor.

That was how I came to know Miss Reiter, later Madame Iselin, who was one of the greatest friends I have ever had. She told me afterwards that when she heard me playing Chopin in the distance she knew the pianist was the man she and Lady Susan had met walking by the Nile, and that she had sent the doctor to make my acquaintance, and had suggested to the Waterfords that they should invite me to luncheon.

Her position on the dahabeeyah was a decidedly unusual one. She was Swiss, highly educated, and was paid to be there as a companion to the two Beresford daughters. The whole family invariably called her "Mousie," and she became to me also "Mousie" to the end of the chapter. Her brother was a banker in Basel, where she seemed to know everyone. She was absolutely self-possessed, and indeed had a ruling quality in her. All the Waterfords seemed to consult her, to take her advice and to let her do very much as she liked. Lady Susan at that time obviously was devoted to her.

Lord Waterford, the eldest of the famous Beresford brothers, one of whom was the Admiral, Lord Charles, was a fine-looking man but had become a permanent invalid on account of a bad accident out hunting. He had to go about in a wheeled chair and I'm afraid often

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suffered a great deal of pain. But he looked, I thought, very well, and his mind was exceedingly alert. Lady Waterford, a daughter of the Duke of Beaufort, and the sister of Lord Henry Somerset, whom my father knew and whom I had met also when we lived in Clifton, was a woman of beautiful character, almost a saint, I think, though with no pretension to be one. She devoted herself to her husband and was also a perfect mother. The two girls were charming. They became eventually Lady Susan Dawney and Lady Clodagh Anson. I saw a good deal of them in Louxor where they made a long stay, both before and after my two journeys to Assouan, and "Mousie" and I became fast friends for life. After the Egyptian days were over I frequently saw her in London, at Ham Common where she lived with Lord and Lady Sudeley, and in Switzerland when she returned there and eventually married Monsieur Iselin, and divided her time between his beautiful mansion overlooking the Rhine in Basel and their delicious little chalet on the Righi. She was an exceptionally interesting and attractive woman with an astonishingly strong personality, and I was devoted to her till her death. We had much in common, as she was intensely musical and also devoted to good literature. She had a genius for friendship.

At Assouan I saw everything there was to see, shot the Cataract, and then came back to stay at the Louxor Hotel, where I found Lord Alfred Douglas established; we met every day. The Winter Palace, now the most fashionable of the Louxor hotels, had not come into existence then, and everybody went to the Louxor Hotel. That winter Lord and Lady Albemarle were there, Lord and Lady Charles Beresford, and "Dodo" Benson, the Archbishop of Canterbury's son, with one of his sisters, as well as a great many others. My meeting with E. F. (or "Dodo") Benson marked a turning-point in my life.

Hotels then were not like they are now. At the Louxor Hotel, instead of all of us having separate tables, there was one long table at which most of us sat. And I was put next to Miss Benson and opposite to her clever brother, who, though younger than I was, had just made an enormous success with his first book, *Dodo*, which was selling furiously in England while he was calmly excavating in Egypt.

I heard everyone talking about this book and almost everyone seemed to be reading it. They all said that Dodo was a character drawn from the life, and that the original was Miss Margot Tennant, now Lady Oxford.

While I talked during dinner to Miss Benson, who struck me as an extraordinarily clever girl, I often looked across at her brother, and, though I don't think I am greatly given to the sin of envy, I remember envying him. Still such a young man and already such an amazing success!

He was very sunburnt and looked like a thorough outdoor man. No

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wonder, for he was labouring every day on the other side of the Nile —I think with Mr. Hogarth.

"How happy and proud he must be feeling!" I thought.

And then I compared him silently with myself, and seeds of dissatisfaction were sown in me.

Why had not I written a book?

Well, of course I had. But when I was only seventeen, a raw youth. And what a book! *The Coastguard's Secret!* Dead years ago! Dead? It had never really lived. Nobody so far as I knew had read it, outside of my own family.

And now I was not far from thirty, and was still only a journalist and a writer of occasional short, or shortish stories.

When I say "only a journalist" I don't mean to speak with contempt of journalists. On the contrary, I think journalism is a terrible job to tackle successfully. Knowing how fast many journalists have to work, and what an amount of knowledge they must have always ready at call, I have often thought that really good or brilliant journalism requires astonishing talent, such as, though I have been a journalist myself, I cannot claim. What I mean is simply that I had longed for a considerable time to write imaginative work, work that could be done quietly, at leisure as it were, taking your time in your own room, far away from a newspaper office and the demands of your editor. I was thankful enough to get journalistic work and I was destined to be a working journalist for several more years. But I knew that I wanted to write fiction. And here was a man younger than myself, who had already written what must evidently be a startlingly brilliant piece of fiction. He sat opposite to me looking happy, jolly even. No wonder! All London—that mattered—was talking about him.

During that stay in Louxor I had very pleasant relations with both the Bensons and two or three times made expeditions alone with "E. F." on the other side of the Nile. He was a delightful companion, full of cleverness and humour; of knowledge too. Later on I read *Dodo* with great amusement, and many other books by him. He wrote an astonishing number of novels, and also short stories and memoirs. He had the writing itch that seemed to be inherent also in his two brothers. Although I enjoyed reading him, I thought him still more delightful, cleverer even, in conversation than in his books. He had well-developed sporting tendencies, too, was good at games and was a specially accomplished skater. He and Lord Alfred got on marvellously together, the wit of the one seeming to call out and polish the wit of the other. Our dinners together in Louxor were without one moment of dullness, for Miss Benson, though different from, was as clever in conversation as her brother. I never met anyone else so quick to notice a flaw in an argument as she was. Benson spoke to me of

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his father, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and called him "a most beautiful man." He said, "You must meet him," and when we were back in London had an invitation sent to me to a garden party at Lambeth Palace. There I came across a very "churchy" cousin of mine, Henry Wagner, who lived in Half Moon Street, and who nearly had a fit from distressed surprise at seeing me apparently quite at home in archiepiscopal circles.

Among others in Louxor that winter was Reginald Turner, a relation of the Lawson family, the head of which was Lord Burnham, the owner of the *Daily Telegraph*. Many will still remember him as one of the most amusing conversationalists of the time, friend of most of the young wits of London, and as witty as any of them. When my visit to Louxor had lasted some weeks, I again went up the Nile on a post boat, with Lord Alfred Douglas and Turner. While on board, Lord Alfred wrote a very fine sonnet. Since then, of course, he has made a name for himself as a poet, and has written a sonnet—besides much else of value—that can rank with the great sonnet of Blanco White, "To Night."

Eventually I travelled down the Nile on a steamer with Lord Alfred and E. F. Benson, both of whom I was to see again in London, and after a sojourn at the Mena House Hotel, where I visited the Sphinx every day and on many a night, I sailed at last for Europe again, making the whole voyage by sea. My health by that time was much better and I felt eager for work. The meeting with E. F. Benson and Lord Alfred Douglas, both so brilliant in their different ways, and so full of fun, seemed to have waked up in me something that must have been half asleep, or at least drowsing. I arrived in London eager to "do something."

But exactly—what? I had not yet made up my mind about that.

Fate, destiny, whatever you like to call it, led me to a decision, and very soon after my arrival in London.

It came about in this way.

Lord Alfred Douglas, who was also in London, asked me to come to lunch with him at a restaurant—I think at the Café Royal—to meet his famous friend, Mr. Oscar Wilde. Of course I knew a good deal about Mr. Wilde. Moreover, I had seen him. I had even heard him lecture at the Victoria Rooms in Clifton, where I had once played solos on the piano at a concert. And I had been to first nights of his brilliant and popular plays. His first modern play, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, had drawn all London, and on the opening night he had taken a vociferous call for the author with a gold-tipped cigarette sticking out impertinently from his humorous mouth. The idea of meeting the most witty and sought after man in London thrilled me. But I was slightly alarmed at it too. Could I possibly hope to be up to Mr. Wilde's mark—if he had a mark?

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I am quite sure I wasn't, but I found him the least alarming and least exigent of men, full of cordiality, humour, and what seemed to me to be exuberant good nature.

Although, in consequence of what happened later, my name has often been spoken of in connection with Oscar Wilde's name, I should like to put it on record here that we were only together on four or possibly five occasions, and that there was never, so far as I was aware, a shadow between us. All my meetings with him were happy ones, and one was more than happy, lively, amusing; it was deeply interesting. For during it I saw not merely the wit and the humorist but the deeply serious and imaginative Oscar.

I was with him that day at the Café Royal, and we parted in Regent Street after the luncheon. On three occasions he called on me, or came to me, in my rooms in Buckingham Palace Road. I cannot recall meeting him on any other occasion. But it is just possible that I may have, once more, and forgotten it. The first time he visited me several friends came also, among them Lord Alfred, Max Beerbohm, whom I met for the first time after my winter in Egypt, and Reginald Turner. This was at night, and we sat up all of us talking and laughing till late. A second time Mr. Wilde came in the evening on his way back to Tite Street, bringing with him a friend whose name I forget. The last time I saw him in my rooms he came alone in the evening and stayed for a long time. He was in a serious mood and talked very interestingly, and he talked about his own work, either done, or to do.

After speaking about his plays, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *An Ideal Husband*, *A Woman of No Importance*, and the delightful piece of nonsense called *The Importance of Being Earnest*, he spoke of other work of his that I knew nothing about. First he talked of his French play, *Salomé*, and gave me a dramatic description of it. Then he went on to a story called *The Sphere*, which he had perhaps begun to write, or, if not that, had certainly thought out in his mind. And finally he told me all about another piece of prose, apparently not yet begun, which was either to be written as a dramatic story or as a play. (I don't think he had made up his mind about this.)

I thought, and still think, that *The Sphere* had a very original subject and would have made a wonderful story. So far as I know, Oscar Wilde never wrote it. But long after his tragedy and death, taking up a volume of stories by Frank Harris, I came across Oscar's story, not nearly so well told as when he had told it to me in Buckingham Palace Road.

The last conception he was meditating over had, he said, the title of *La Sainte Courtisane*. This impressed me even more than *The Sphere* and *Salomé*. And I told him I thought it quite wonderful.

He seemed pleased at my obviously sincere admiration, for I was

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quite carried away by it and I must have expressed my feeling warmly. He left me realizing that I had had a wonderful evening with a wonderful man.

A queer thing happened in connection with *La Sainte Courtisane*, which set me wondering. Oscar Wilde told me that his story was connected with a monk who lived alone in the Thebaïd and a famous courtesan who practised her profession in Alexandria. The monk was a rigid ascetic and had a holy horror of sin. The courtesan held all virtue in contempt, thought chastity, especially in a man, ridiculous, and lived entirely for the senses, for passion, for luxury, for reckless pleasure. Rumour, busy even in the desert, brought to the knowledge of the monk tidings of this beautiful and terrible woman, of her power over men and her destructive force, exercised often for the sole pleasure of doing evil. In far-away Alexandria tidings of the monk reached the ears of the courtesan, roused at first her contempt, then her curiosity, and finally a vicious desire to turn him from his ridiculous virtue, his emasculate holiness, to the knowledge and practice of those bodily pleasures which she knew so well how to arouse, to sustain, to drive on into passion, to frenzy, until at last, as with Thamar, one more victim came to destruction through her.

In the desert the monk said to himself, "I will make a pilgrimage to the great city, and there I will turn this criminal woman from her wickedness, subdue her, convert her, force her by my virtue to throw herself at my feet for the glory of God."

In Alexandria the courtesan said to herself, "There is no man born of woman who can resist me when I put forth my power. I will go to the desert and show the world how easy it is for a beautiful woman to turn a saint into a sinner. The monk shall become my lover."

According to Oscar Wilde, a woman who has made up her mind to something is quicker off the mark than a man who has made up his, and so it was that just as the monk was about to set out on his journey to Alexandria the courtesan appeared before the door of his miserable dwelling and demanded admittance.

The monk came out, and there, in the sand of the desolation, a debate took place between the lean, fierce and fervid ascetic and the voluptuous temptress.

Oscar Wilde sketched this debate for me in a few characteristic words, uttered with his usual nonchalance, as of a man carelessly dropping treasures by the wayside.

Each of the antagonists was obstinate and would give no quarter. The debate was long and seemed indecisive. For it ended thus: the monk told the courtesan to go back whence she had come, the courtesan contemptuously rejected his appeals to her to change her life of sin for a life of holiness. Then the monk disappeared into his hut and the woman was left outside the shut door.

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Here Oscar Wilde paused, and presently I said, "Is that the end? Is that all?"

Oscar Wilde put up his hand to his mouth, in a gesture very characteristic of him when he was preparing a coup. It did not entirely conceal the smile that was curving his lips.

"No. What happened was this. In the debate which had seemed to lead nowhere each of the debaters had converted the other. And as the courtesan struck on the door to tell the monk she would turn her back on a life that had now become hateful to her, the monk opened it and came out crying, "Take me with you to Alexandria. I have not lived. I have never known life. Teach me to live—with you!"

"And—then?"

"Then—then,"—he waved the hand which he had lifted to his mouth—"I suppose they changed places. She remained in the desert, and he set out alone for the distant city. I have not worked all that out. My point is that the sinner had converted the saint, and that in the same debate about good and evil the saint had converted the sinner. That's rather nice, I think. And it might have happened. Why not? Everything happens."

Not very long after this conversation I read the famous romance, *Thaïs*, by Anatole France, and found that Oscar Wilde's story, in a different form, was the theme of it. Anatole France had left the courtesan in Alexandria and had caused his monk to go there to convert her from sin to holiness. After the meeting in Alexandria the monk lost his saintliness, while the courtesan was induced by him to hate the life she had led. And at the end of the book, the monk went out from her blaspheming because she resisted his assaults on her virtue, and she died in the odour of sanctity. When telling me what he called "his" story Oscar Wilde gave me no hint that it had ever been treated by another, or that it had perhaps been founded on or suggested by a legend. I had supposed in my ignorance that it was all an invention by him.

A great many impressions of Oscar Wilde have been written by people who knew, or who only met, him casually.

I had no intimacy with him, but having spent altogether several hours in his company, once alone, I received the impression that he was a man full of exuberant humour, which played over his conversation like a dancing flame. He was cordial in manner, good-natured, often deliberately absurd, and not at all insufferably vain. (I mention this last impression because I have often heard him spoken of as eaten up by vanity.) I never heard him say a coarse thing. There was nothing Rabelaisian about him. He never showed himself to me as a man of sentiment. Sentimentality seemed to have no lodging in him. He was kind, but I don't know whether he was ready to put himself out in the way of kindness. He was always largely sure of himself, and I

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am certain he knew nothing about the shyness which afflicts secretly so many people. When he relapsed—one must call it that—into seriousness he was very interesting and at moments even profound. He was, I should say, an eminently likeable man.

As an instance of how absurd he could be without premeditation I may mention something that occurred in my sitting-room in Buckingham Palace Road when he came there with Lord Alfred Douglas one evening to meet some friends.

In the room was a very low and large and deep armchair, with two arms, on each of which there was room to put a plate, cup or glass. Reginald Turner was ensconced in this chair, with a tumbler of whisky-and-soda resting on the left chair-arm. And Oscar Wilde was sitting beside him on a higher chair smoking a cigarette. He had a habit, when holding forth, of occasionally waving airily a large hand. In doing this he knocked over Turner's whisky-and-soda and poor Turner was drenched. When he had been carefully dried with a rough towel, after being evacuated from the chair, the conversation was resumed and the chair was left empty.

A few minutes later, Oscar Wilde placed his tumbler of whisky-and-soda on the arm where Turner's had been, and continued to pour forth words of wit and wisdom while we sat attentively round him. Once more came an ample wave of his expressive hand, and once more a tumbler of whisky-and-soda was poured out, but this time over an empty chair. Oscar glanced at the chair, wrinkled his forehead and remarked,

"Oh, what a waste! I forgot that Reggie was not sitting there now!"

I never came across Oscar Wilde after the tragedy which overtook him. We were never in the same place or neighbourhood to my knowledge. I only saw him in his days of success and social popularity.

One little episode shows how completely defiant Oscar Wilde was about public opinion, the opinion of "the Philistines" as he would probably have called it in speaking of it.

There was a fashionable first night in a London theatre. I think, but am not sure, that it was the Royalty Theatre. In this theatre there was only one entrance to the stalls, and this was on the left as one faced the stage. Opposite to it on the other side of the theatre was a large stage box. I had a seat in the stalls for this first night. There was a crowd of critics, journalists, and smart people. Every stall was occupied when the curtain went up on the first act of the play, but the big stage box was empty. About ten minutes after the play had begun Oscar Wilde appeared, of course immaculately dressed, and wearing in his buttonhole a large carnation dyed a violent green. Behind him came I think five ultra-smart youths, all decorated with similar green carnations. This startling procession strolled slowly

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across the front of the stalls, disappeared, and reappeared in the stage box. Next day all London was talking about the green carnations, and I had got the title for a book which I began to write almost immediately, with the *Dodo* success of E. F. Benson still fresh in my mind.

Many books I have written have cost me a lot of labour and thought, but *The Green Carnation* was written with an ease which I wish I had not lost. And I think four weeks saw the beginning and end of it. But of course it was a very short book.

When it was finished I had it typed and then sent the MS. to my good friend, Sir Douglas Straight, with a note asking him, if he had time, to read it and give me his opinion on it. I also asked him whether it was suitable for serial use in a magazine. In reply I got a letter from him, saying he was against the idea of using the MS. serially, but that it must certainly be published, and that he was sending it with a note to Mr. William Heinemann, the brilliant Jewish publisher, who was just then publishing a series of quite short books by unknown, or at any rate little known, authors.

The consequence of this was that I got to know Mr. Heinemann, who became my friend and published many of my books.

He wrote asking me to come at once to his office. I went and met him for the first time.

What a clever man "Willie" Heinemann was! He was a true cosmopolitan, a live wire if ever there was one, a searcher after new paths, a man with a will of his own, a man of more than good taste, an extraordinarily well-read man, as sharp as any man in the huge city of London.

"Please sit down!" he said. "You really wrote *The Green Carnation*?"

I said I did write it.

"Well," he went on, "I have had it shown to George Lewis."

Mr., afterwards Sir George Lewis, was the most famous solicitor in England at that time.

"Why was that?" I asked.

"I wasn't at all sure that an action for libel mightn't lie against your book."

"Oh!" I said, beginning to feel very uncomfortable.

"But Lewis thinks I can go ahead and publish it. What do you want for it?"

I said I didn't know. I had scarcely any experience of publishing and publishers.

"I will either give you a good sum down for all rights, or a small sum down and a royalty on the sales. Which do you prefer?"

I asked rather diffidently how much he would give me for all rights if I was to have no royalty. He said,

"I'll give you five hundred pounds down right away."

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I was tempted, very much tempted, but I asked for a day or two to think it over. He agreed to this and I decided to take a small sum down and a royalty. Undoubtedly I should have done much better with this system than by accepting five hundred pounds for all rights had not subsequent tragic events led me to ask Heinemann to stop the sale of my book just when it was having an enormous success, which should perhaps be called *un succès de scandale*.

When I paid my second visit to Heinemann I was shown into an apparently private room, furnished like a sitting-room, and asked to wait there.

While I was waiting a strange-looking reddish-fair man, with a rather Shakespearean forehead, and large dreamy—perhaps deliberately dreamy—eyes came in, and found me there. He raised his eyebrows as if in inquiry.

I told him my name and that I had been taken there to wait.

"Ha!" he said. "You have written *The Green Carnation*?"

I said, rather anxiously, that I had. He then told me that he was Hall Caine and that he had read my book.

I believe at that time he sometimes advised Heinemann about manuscripts submitted to the firm. Financially he must have been, I should think, the backbone of it, for his novels had sales that were gigantic. I don't think Heinemann cared much for them personally, but he cared very much about being their publisher. I found Hall Caine very kind and sympathetic, and afterwards, from time to time, had pleasant interviews with him. I was also introduced to his wife.

He was, I think, a *poseur*, but he was excellent company and not made disagreeable, or overpowering, by his enormous success. Marie Corelli and he were supposed to be rivals because each had such exceptionally great financial triumphs, not always attended by satisfactory critiques. Marie Corelli told me once that the head of a firm of big publishers asked her to lunch at the Carlton and offered her thirty thousand pounds down if she would sell to him the world rights of her next long novel.

"And—?" I ventured.

"Of course I refused."

There was a question with Heinemann as to whether I should put any name, as author, on the title page of my book. He advised me not to put any name.

"Then it will be attributed to half the well-known authors in England," he said. "And the sales will soar."

I followed his advice and the book came out anonymously.

On the day of publication there was an article about it in the *Daily Telegraph*, written, I believe, by Mr. Beatty Kingston, and the sales began at once. The journalists tried to find out who was the author and many names were put forward; among them the names of Oscar

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Wilde himself; of Marie Corelli—because she had written anonymously *The Silver Domino*; of Mr. Alfred Austin, afterwards the poet laureate; and of various others. Then an amusing thing happened. I received one morning, handed in together, two telegrams. One was signed "Oscar," the other was from Lord Alfred Douglas. I can't now remember the exact wording of them. But Oscar Wilde's told me that "all is discovered" and suggested instant flight on my part to escape his vengeance. And Lord Alfred's told me that I was unmasked and had better go into hiding. Both telegrams were burlesque and merely good jokes. And Lord Alfred's was followed almost immediately by a visit and an invitation to go out to dinner with him at a restaurant—I think it was the Café Royal. I accepted, of course, and we went.

While we were dining, and discussing *The Green Carnation* amicably, a group of well-known London journalists, who had reserved a table near ours, came in to dine. Two or three, or perhaps all of them, knew Lord Alfred, and, seeing him, they at once came over to us. (I knew none of them.)

"Now tell us who wrote *The Green Carnation*," they said. "You must know. Was it ——?" they mentioned name after name.

To each name Lord Alfred said, "No!"

"Then it must be—So-and-so?"

"No, it isn't!"

"Don't you know who it is?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then who is it?"

"It was written by this wicked man who is dining here with me now."

All the journalists' eyes were fixed upon me.

"Let me introduce him to you."

And he told them my name.

They had never heard of me, I suppose. At any rate, their surprise seemed to me not untinged with incredulity. They even seemed to be subdued by surprise, and after a few perfunctory words they retired and left us to ourselves.

Lord Alfred was delighted with this little adventure.

Eventually, rather soon in fact, probably on account of my encounter with the journalists, it became generally known that *The Green Carnation* was the work of a man called Hichens, a journalist, who had written also a few short stories which had been published. But an absurd rumour also got about that my delightful cousin, Andrew Hichens, who had married the lovely May Prinsep, and had a house in Chester Street, Belgrave Square, and was on the Stock Exchange in the business founded by my grandfather, was the author. Andrew, the last man to have written such an impudent book, was greatly amused

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at this, and accused me laughingly of destroying his reputation as a polished *homme du monde*, who knew everyone worth knowing in London.

Finally, as a secret not kept is not worth bothering about, my name appeared as the author on a new edition of the book, and I was fairly launched on the terrible career.

Most people, I think, expected me to go on writing lively, amusing and satirical work, but I had other ambitions, and after a book of short stories, containing "The Wolf's Life," which was published in his magazine by Mr. Henley, the great journalist and poet, I brought out, of course with Heinemann, a rather concentrated and sombre book, laid in Egypt and called *An Imaginative Man*. This had some very good reviews, but I think it puzzled, and perhaps even distressed, those who were expecting some more good fun and impertinent personalities from me, and the sales were not very large.

Meanwhile an offer that seemed to me very startling and that rather alarmed me was made to me by Major Arthur Griffiths, whom I had met first in Egypt, and who had become for a short time the editor of the *World*, a weekly paper which had at that time a great reputation. Mr. Edmund Yates had founded it. Mr. William Archer was the dramatic critic on it and Mr. George Bernard Shaw the critic of music.

Major Griffiths told me that Mr. Bernard Shaw was leaving the paper to become the dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review*, edited by Frank Harris, and that the *World* wished me to take his place. I should receive the same salary as he had had, and should sign my weekly article with my initials only. The salary, I found, was only either five pounds or five guineas—(I forget which)—a week. But I should have stalls for the Covent Garden Opera and tickets for every concert in London.

My hesitation was great. I told Major Griffiths that I doubted whether I was fit to hold such a post. He insisted that I was, and said the paper did not want solemn and scientific articles, minutely analysing great works of music, but lively and entertaining descriptions of what was being done in the musical world.

"We know you can do it," he said, "because of *The Green Carnation*."

"But to succeed a Bernard Shaw?" I said.

"You needn't be afraid of him. We don't want you to imitate him."

"I couldn't."

"All the better. Think it over. William Archer for the drama and you for the music."

I thought it over with fear and trembling. For I had a great deal of reverence for Archer's admirable work as a critic, and the memory of

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Bernard Shaw's wit and brilliance would be alive in all of my readers. But at last I yielded and decided to "have a try at it." That "try" lasted for, if I remember rightly, just over three years, when I resigned from the *World* as I intended very shortly to give up regular journalistic employment and to travel abroad. It was this resolution which led me to refuse Lord Burnham's much appreciated offer to join the staff of the *Daily Telegraph* with a salary of two thousand pounds a year. I think he was a good deal surprised by my refusal, for he was a great journalist himself and lived in the life of his newspaper, but he was very pleasant about it, remained my friend, and I stayed with him once at his beautiful country home, Hall Barn, Beaconsfield.

Although the success of *The Green Carnation* had made my name very well known, and had caused my work to be sought after in England, and although it had also brought me into public notice in America, where it was published by an American firm and had a large sale, a certain amount of unpleasantness was caused to me by the many criticisms of well-known living people that I had put into it, criticisms which, though I had delivered them from the lips of "Esmé Amarinth" and "Lord Reginald Hastings," were supposed by many people to express my own opinions. In most cases they were not my own opinions but the imagined opinions of my characters.

For instance, I knew Mrs. Lynn Linton, liked and admired her very much, and thought her one of the most brilliant women in England. But I made Mrs. Windsor say that, to her, Mrs. Linton's articles rather suggested Bedlam, and Mr. Amarinth declare that they were all like sheep that had gone astray.

Mrs. Linton was very angry about this and castigated me in a London evening paper in an article called "Young Dogs."

When I had read it I wrote to her trying to explain that I totally disagreed with both Mrs. Windsor and Mr. Amarinth. She forgave me, asked me to visit her again, and our pleasant acquaintanceship was renewed.

Many others were attacked in a similar way in *The Green Carnation*. One was Lewis Morris, well known then as a poet. By chance I stayed with him in a country house party and was frostily received. Another who was made fun of was Mr. Haweis, an exceedingly well known London clergyman and a musical critic. In the same house party I met him. But he laughed about my impertinence and was only amused by it. Not so Mr. Joseph Bennett, a prominent journalist, and a writer of libretti which were set to music by well-known composers. I had made Mr. Amarinth compare him to the poet Bunn and exclaim wearily, "But where are his plums?" When I was introduced to Mr. Bennett at the Gloucester Festival he looked horrified, said in a loud voice, "I am sure this gentleman has no wish to meet a man who

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has been compared to the poet Bunn," and turned away without greeting me.

Many others were attacked, or laughed at, in my book, including people whom I afterwards knew well, fairly well or slightly. Among these were Lady Jeune, Wilson Barrett the actor, Sarah Grand, who wrote *The Heavenly Twins*, Mr. George Augustus Sala, Sir George Alexander, Mrs. Humphry Ward, the painter Herkomer, Mr. George Moore, and Miss Rhoda Broughton. The attack on George Moore, whom I admired wholeheartedly, and thought one of the greatest writers of the time, was delivered by Mr. Amarinth and was especially severe. He was made to say:

"If George Moore could only learn the subtle art of indecency he might be tolerable. As it is, he is, like Miss Yonge, merely tedious and domesticated. He ought to associate more with educated people instead of going perpetually to the dependent performances of the independent theatre."

I knew Mr. Moore, met him a good many times, had some letters from him, and was even given one of his manuscripts to read before it was published. He never bore me any malice for my book, but treated it as a rather impudent joke.

In *The Green Carnation* the critics *en masse* were gibed at, and I think some of them never forgave me. I often sat among many of them later on, and was not too well received. Also now and then I came in for a very severe treatment in prominent newspapers.

Two instances of this may perhaps be worth recording.

I knew a very agreeable young man, whose name I need not give. He is dead. But when I lived in London he was exceedingly well known and socially popular. Two or three times he came to my rooms. He always greeted me cordially when I met him out, and I thought he was a friend of mine, though not exactly an intimate friend.

The Harmsworths knew and liked him, and he wrote on the *Daily Mail* staff.

The fifth book I published was called *Flames, a London Phantasy*, and was the first long book I wrote.

Directly after it was published Heinemann sent me a letter containing a cutting. This cutting was an article in the *Daily Mail* attacking *Flames*. In his letter enclosing it Heinemann wrote, "Who is your enemy?"

I did not know that I had an enemy. But evidently the writer of the cutting was one.

Almost immediately after this a big London daily published a leading article on *Flames*, praising it in almost exaggerated terms. On the night of the day on which this came out I had to go for the *World* to an important concert and sat near to the agreeable young man whom I thought of as a friend.

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Directly he saw me he came up, shook my hand and warmly congratulated me on that day's leading article.

"I haven't had time to read your book yet," he said. "But I'll get it as soon as possible. Meanwhile, all my congratulations!"

Shortly afterwards I found out that he was the author of the attack in the *Daily Mail*.

So much for sincerity!

I had a rather similar experience when I published *The Garden of Allah*. But I'll allude to that later.

Shortly after having published *The Green Carnation*, and joining the staff of the *World* as musical critic, I left Buckingham Palace Road and took a flat in a building in Shaftesbury Avenue which I furnished and decorated. It was high up at the end of Shaftesbury Avenue, close to Oxford Street and the site on which the Prince's Theatre was long afterwards built. I chose this flat because Reginald Temple, with whom I was intimate, and who had been with my two brothers at Magdalen College, Oxford, had a flat in the same house just below. He had three delightfully furnished rooms. I had only two, a passage and a bathroom. My bedroom was blue and white, like blue-and-white china, and my sitting-room was olive-green and red. At last I was *dans mes meubles* and began to feel rather pleased with myself. I had made a start. My father was satisfied. Money was coming in steadily, though not as yet in very great quantities. I had tickets for every interesting concert and opera performance in London. My time was fully, almost too fully, occupied, and I now knew many people, and was continually being introduced to fresh ones. This was certainly one of the most interesting, and I dare say happy, times in my life, though slightly marred by my not very good health. The effect of the poison that had brought on peritonitis had not been entirely banished by my winter in Egypt, and for a long time I suffered occasionally from its results. Still, I was never in bed, could work very hard, and often had what is called "a good time."

Temple was devoted to the theatre, and knew a good many theatre people, to some of whom he introduced me. We often had little suppers with them after the play, for I continued to go often to "First Nights" as well as to the musical performances it was my business to chronicle. And by degrees I came to know some of the chief stage favourites of London.

One of these was the famous comédienne and singer Miss Marie Tempest.

An intimate of Temple, Cosmo Gordon-Lennox, who afterwards became her husband, introduced me to her. He asked me to go to the first night of a musical comedy in which she had the principal part, and while she was being rapturously applauded murmured to me,

"Isn't she bewitching!"

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I knew then that he was in love with her.

I think that it was on that evening he introduced me to her, and very soon we became friends.

Eventually this friendship led to my collaborating with him on a play. I had already collaborated once before, unfortunately without success, but was very busy with journalistic work, going to concerts and the writing of fiction. For I never lost sight of my strongest ambition, which was to establish myself as a novelist, and was already at work upon *Flames*, many scenes of which were laid in Cosmo Lennox's large apartment in Victoria Street. This contained a "tent room" where I made the "sittings" of the two friends, who were the chief characters in my "phantasy," take place in the London nights.

At that time I was interested in "spiritualism," as it was called, and so was Temple, and I attended several séances, and knew various people who claimed to have occult powers. I have never been convinced that the souls of those we call dead are able to communicate with the living, and have expressed my lack of conviction in at least one book and been taken to task for it. But on the other hand, some have called me credulous. For I believe that certain people, specially endowed, are able at times to foretell the future correctly, and to foresee what is coming to those whom they call their "clients," or for friends who consult them. And I have no doubt at all that apparitions of the dead have been many times seen haunting the places in which they have formerly lived and loved and perhaps—though not always—suffered. I have myself lived for a time in a house which was haunted by its former owner, a famous Englishman. I never saw the apparition of him, but an intimate friend of mine did on at least four occasions. And it was, I believe, seen in daylight by a famous actress when she was staying with me.

The actress was Miss Marion Terry.

The reason why I believe that some people have the power to foretell the future is the simple fact that several times I have been told of things that would happen to me, and that could not possibly have been expected to happen either by me or by anyone else.

And these things did happen.

But though I don't shut my mind, and am capable of convictions that may seem to many sceptics entirely ridiculous, in no séance at which I have been present have I been convinced that the so-called dead can be summoned to earth to have intercourse with the living.

Far the most famous "Seer" in the London of my time, one who eventually became known all over the world, was the man who called himself "Cheiro, the palmist." I knew him well in my London days and was several times with him in Victoria Street, where he showed me the curious machine which he said could indicate how much psychic force a man was able to put forth without his coming into

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any physical contact with it. He tested me with this on two occasions with curious results.

Cheiro was a handsome, attractive Irishman, whom I knew for some time as "Lewis Warner." One afternoon when I called upon him he surprised me by saying, "Today I am able to reveal to you who I really am."

I said, "But I know, don't I?"

"No," he replied, with a gracious smile. "For various reasons I have concealed it. I am the Count de Hamong."

I confess to having been rather taken aback by this unforeseen revelation. But I asked no questions and accepted it as quite natural that a young Irishman should suddenly be converted into a foreign nobleman.

Recently I came across Cheiro's autobiography. At the beginning was an excellent photograph of him. On the opposite page it was stated that the book was by "Count Louis Harmon."

Nevertheless on that long-ago day Mr. Lewis Warner informed me that he was "Count de Hamong."

Cheiro predicted for me a rather rosy future, but what he said about that has not lingered in my memory. I remember, however, several predictions that were made to me when I was a busy London journalist and later on when I became fairly well known.

Before I published *The Green Carnation* I was asked to write a few articles about the occultists and "seers" of London. I agreed to undertake this job and sought some of them out. One of the first I visited was a total stranger to me. I rang her bell in Bond Street. The door was answered by a maid and I was shown in to the Sibyl. I gave her no name, but merely said I had heard of her powers and wished to consult her. She said it would cost me one guinea. I agreed to the price, and she examined my hands and also looked in a crystal ball. My fate, she asserted, might be shown to her there. She was a very thin, feverish-looking woman, with a dark complexion and dyed auburn hair.

"I am Mexican," she stated.

I was quite ready to believe it.

After a while she said, "I suppose you know that you are accompanied by a Guide, or at any rate by someone who will certainly greatly influence your life in the future."

I said I was quite unconscious of that.

"It's a monk," she then said. "Are you a Roman Catholic?"

"Oh no!" I said. "A Protestant."

"Don't you know any monk?"

"No."

"You will know one some day. Several perhaps. I see you surrounded by monks. I see bands of monks. I see you also alone, talking with a monk."

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"Really!"

"You don't believe it?"

"It doesn't seem to me very probable."

"Remember what I have told you. Monks, or a monk, will have a great influence on your life, a very fortunate influence."

I left this lady thinking she had talked a lot of nonsense to me. But years afterwards, when I stayed with the Trappist monks at Stouëli, in North Africa, when I talked in the cemetery there with the old monk who gave me the idea which I embodied later on in *The Garden of Allah*, and when, with that book, I reached a turning-point in my career as a novelist, I remembered that evening in London, and the curious insistence of the woman to whom I gave a guinea and whom I left thinking she was a charlatan.

Since then I have had several strange experiences with people who claimed to have the faculty of foreseeing the future, and formed a friendship with one of them which has lasted for, I suppose, nearly fifty years. She foretold that I should have a failure with a piece of work, which unfortunately came about though I didn't expect it. But she also foretold for me the success which arrived with the publication of *The Garden of Allah*, and even indicated, several years ahead, at what age I should achieve it. But meanwhile, giving the medium his due, let me tell of an experience I had with a man about whose strange powers Sir Oliver Lodge wrote a chapter in his book called *Raymond*.

Among the many interesting people whom I came to know well in London before I gave up living there permanently and began to spend much of my time abroad, were Sir Eric and Lady Barrington, a delightful and original couple, who had a house in Cadogan Place containing a long drawing-room downstairs and a dining-room upstairs. Sir Eric was a great gun at the Foreign Office, and Lady Barrington was a cousin of the beautiful Lady Horner, and was the devoted friend of Paderewski, of the famous American actress Ada Rehan, and of, it seemed to me, most of the really talented and fascinating people of that day. I dined with them many times, and they actually allowed me eventually to become acquainted with Miss Rehan. This was a specially great favour, for they made it their business to "protect" Miss Rehan, who, it seems, was extremely exclusive and had a great distaste to meeting what Lady Barrington spoke of as "casual strangers."

One day Sir Eric invited me to lunch with him in a restaurant noted for its cuisine, and there I met for the first time someone who became connected with the prophecy made to me by Sir Oliver's medium.

About a week or ten days before I went to this lunch I happened to have an afternoon empty of all engagements, and in an idle moment I picked up the *Morning Post* and glanced at the advertisements. My eyes fell upon one which stated that a certain man, whose name I had never

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heard of, gave consultations at an address in Earl's Court, that he was a hand-reader, a crystal-gazer and I know not what else. His telephone number was given. I did not call him up. But having nothing particular to do I thought possibly it might amuse me to pay him a visit, and I went by underground railway to Earl's Court Station and made my way to the address in the advertisement.

The house looked uninviting. It had pillars of stucco, and stood in a long line of similar depressing abodes, without character, without a single feature to recommend them.

I stepped up into the porch between the pillars, inclined to wonder vaguely why I had journeyed there. But, being there, I rang the bell. It was instantly answered by a very extraordinary-looking man.

He was youngish, extremely thin, with primrose-coloured hair—far from thick—and large, pale and vague eyes. He had long-fingered waxen-white hands and they were holding a chain, or thread, on which coloured beads were strung. He wore rather dirty flannel trousers and an old Norfolk jacket. A red necktie made a splash of colour beneath a forlorn collar, soft, flabby, that seemed anxious to get away from a long, but not swanlike neck.

I felt inclined to run away from him. But there I was, and there he was. And he said,

"Yes—please?"

"Are you Mr. Alfred Vout Peters?"

"That's me!"

I told him then that I had seen his advertisement in the *Morning Post* and because of it had come to Earl's Court. And as I said it I thought what a fool I had been.

"Pray walk in!" he said, smiling. "This way, please."

I followed him into a room opposite to an umbrella-stand in a passage.

"I'm making a chain," he added. "I'm threading beads!"

I wondered why he had put on flannels for such a sport. But I only said, "Yes, I see you are."

"If you'll just wait till I finish I'll take you. Pray be seated."

I sat down on a small mustard-coloured settee and he gave me a copy of the *Illustrated London News*. Then he sat down a little way off and resumed his strange occupation.

In about ten minutes he had finished it, and came to "take me."

Then this is what happened.

First he read my hands, spoke about my character, my health and so forth. When this was done he said, "Now I'll look in the crystal for you."

And he brought a red plush cushion to a small table near a window, placed on it a large crystal ball, made me sit down and sat down opposite to me.

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"Mind!" he said, with his Cockney accent. "I shall tell you just what I see, good or bad."

I told him I only wished for the truth, if any truth there was, and begged him to go ahead.

In silence he stared into the crystal and presently began to speak in a low voice. He said that he saw a castle. It was large and in an extremely lonely place. It had "turrets." It was built round a courtyard in which there was a chapel. A river ran close to the castle just beyond the walls.

"I can hear the sound of the water," he said, lifting a waxen-white hand.

After a pause he added, "Monks used to live here."

I thought of the Mexican woman.

He went on to say that there was in the castle a long corridor on which many rooms opened. This was haunted. A ghost walked there.

I felt my lips curl.

"The mysteries of Udolpho!" I thought.

"You know this castle," he said.

I said that I didn't know it.

"Then very soon you will," he said. "You are going to stay there."

"When?" I asked.

"This year," he said.

"Where is it?" I asked. "In Scotland?"

"No," he exclaimed. "Far away. Out of England. Out of Europe I should say. Or—almost. It is all among mountains."

I thought, "That sounds like Scotland."

"One of the mountains is a terrible mountain," he added.

"What do you mean? How terrible?"

"I don't know. But it's not like other mountains. It's a terrible mountain."

He then repeated all he had said, dwelling specially on the river, on the fact of monks having lived there once, and of the haunted corridor and the complete loneliness of the situation.

"You will stay there soon—this year," he reiterated.

"I never pay visits," I said.

"Do you travel?"

"Yes, sometimes. But I never pay private visits. When I travel I stay in hotels."

He shook his head with the primrose-coloured hair. "You will be there. If you are, will you write and tell me?"

"Yes," I said lightly.

This was in the month of June, I think, or early July.

I paid my fee, took down the man's address, and went away leaving him to his beads.

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The sequel to this interview surprised me.

At the lunch to which Sir Eric Barrington had invited me there was only one other guest, a man I had never seen before. He was thin, middle-aged, very well dressed, and looked, I thought, as he came in, like a self-possessed and rather reserved diplomat. But he was not a diplomat, he was a courtier. His name was Mr. Alexander Nelson Hood, a son of Viscount Bridport, and he was attached to the household of the Duchess of York, afterwards Queen Mary. I learned almost immediately that he was a direct descendant of Lord Nelson, the glorious English admiral, and that his father had inherited the great property in Sicily which had been given to Nelson by the King of Naples with the Sicilian title of Duke of Bronte.

Mr. Hood, later Sir Alexander Hood and Duke of Bronte, became one of my best friends, and our friendship only ceased when he died at a great age.

We had a very pleasant lunch that day, and when we parted Mr. Hood invited me to lunch with him at the Carlton Restaurant in the following week.

We were alone at the Carlton and had a long talk. During it he told me that he spent many months of each year in Sicily, where he managed all the business connected with the family estate for his father, although he had an Englishman there who was responsible for everything when he was in England. He was leaving for Sicily early in September. Had I, he asked, ever been in Sicily? I said that I had not, though I had seen something of Italy, though not very much.

"Well," he said when we were parting, "if you ever find yourself in Italy during the autumn, winter or early spring, and feel inclined to visit me at Maniace Castle, where I live, I shall be very glad to welcome you. It's not an ordinary place and I think it might interest you as a writer. I live in the wilds close to Mount Etna."

I thanked him for his kind invitation, but really I had little expectation of accepting it, as I scarcely ever stay in other people's houses.

"You can telegraph to me if you're ever inclined to come," he said. "If you do you are almost sure to find me alone, though in the spring I sometimes have visitors."

I thanked him again and we said goodbye.

Oddly enough, I never thought of my curious interview with the man who had been "threading beads."

Mr. Hood left London. I did not see him again, and as I was very busy, our talk went out of my mind. But in the autumn, when I was spending some days at a place I was very fond of, the Hôtel Villa d'Este on Lago di Como, the memory of Mr. Hood's kind invitation came up in my mind, and I thought to myself,

"Why not make acquaintance with Sicily?"

By this time I was a free-lance, and could go where I liked when I

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liked. Always I was writing, but I could write anywhere, and the farther away from London with all its enticements the better.

Acting on impulse, I telegraphed to Mr. Hood saying I could come to his castle if it would be quite convenient to him, and prepaid an answer. I received one saying, "By all means come am quite alone."

A few days later I arrived at the castle.

Directly I got there the memory of an afternoon in Earl's Court with a man in flannel trousers holding a chain of coloured beads flashed into my mind. I saw the courtyard, I saw the chapel where monks once had prayed, I saw the turrets, I heard the sound of the river Simeto, running by the outer walls of the castle. During the drive downhill into the Bronte property I had seen the terrible mountain, Etna, smoking above the moorland between the hill town of Bronte and the castle of Maniace. What had apparently been visible in the crystal ball on the red plush cushion was with me. And was I in Europe? Anyhow, I was in an island separated from the mainland by the Straits of Messina. And now, as Mr. Hood took me upstairs to show me my bedroom, he said,

"You're not afraid of ghosts, I hope?"

"Why do you ask me?" I said.

"Well, you see this long corridor. The bedrooms open on to it. Mine is not far from yours. It has the reputation of being haunted, none of my servants would ever sleep in this part of the castle even if I wished them to—which I don't."

"I'm not in the least nervous," I said, again thinking of the man in the flannel trousers. "Have you ever seen anything?"

"No. But now and then I have heard sounds in the night as of someone walking in the corridor. That's all."

From time to time I spent a good many weeks in the castle, always occupying a bedroom on that corridor. I never saw or heard anything abnormal.

During that first visit I kept a promise. I wrote to the man with the beads and told him that what he said he had seen in the crystal had amazingly come about. My letter was written in the castle with turrets, a courtyard, and a chapel which had once been the prayer-house of monks. I could hear the river he had spoken of murmuring outside the walls as I sat at my table. My room opened on a corridor said to be haunted. And very near me the terrible mountain, Etna, vomited forth from its volcano a plume of smoke which rose up to a cloudless sky.

I did not tell him that already I had lost my heart to the Island of Sicily in which it was my destiny to spend twelve winters, and about which I was to write a Sicilian novel, *The Call of the Blood*, after writing there the greater part of my novel, *The Garden of Allah*.

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VI

But before my Sicilian and Italian days, and my journeys to North Africa, I had to finish my comparatively brief career as a steadily working journalist. I was also a budding novelist, for in spite of my journalistic work, which involved much time spent in concert-rooms and in my stall at the opera, I always managed to find hours for the writing of fiction. Also, somehow or other, I fitted in social pleasures, for at that period of my life I was extremely fond of going out in society, and never wanted to spend an evening alone in my flat unless I had work to do. As a rule, I did not work late at night. Instead, I burned the candle at both ends. I seldom went to bed before midnight, or long after, and I got up early in the morning to get on with my writing.

The notoriety of *The Green Carnation* had made a great many people aware of my existence, and those who prided themselves upon "knowing everybody" thought it was time they knew me.

One of these was a short, bearded man who was a very prominent figure in those great days of London. He seemed to have met everybody of note in all the countries of Europe, and to have become friends with most of them. He painted pictures; he wrote novels; he wrote plays; he composed songs which I have been told at one time he sang, and whistled, himself. He advised "promising" young men how to work and to live. And he gave parties, many parties, in his delightful apartment in Hanover Square, before whose door very often a strip of red carpet proclaimed that Royalty would honour the assembly. I believe his origin was Greek and that he was born in Paris. He was an English subject and proud of being English. One of his parents, I believe, was English.

He had the attractive name of (Mr.) Hamilton Aïdé. Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the sometimes scorchingly witty actress, told me once that her name for him was "the world's governess."

Hamilton Aïdé of course knew my cousin Andrew Hichens and his lovely wife May, and he came to call upon me. I believe that he was shocked at my living in Shaftesbury Avenue, in a building inhabited mainly by "Bohemians," and I think that the minute size of my flat almost frightened him. But he was exceedingly kind and friendly, and showed almost at once an inclination to "take me in hand."

The impertinence of my *Carnation* had apparently both fascinated and appalled him; the success of it had induced him to make my acquaintance; but he wanted me to be very careful as to what I did next.

"Be careful, my dear boy," he would say. "Be careful. You still have your way to make. You must be very careful."

He asked me to his afternoon parties, where many celebrities were

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to be met with. For he knew all the duchesses, all the actresses, all the (successful) novelists and musicians. And I stayed with him in his attractive country home near Ascot, which he shared with two cousins, a married couple. In the garden, separated from the house, he had built himself a large studio-drawing-room, in which I spent pleasant hours talking about the musical, literary and painting careers, in all of which he had taken part. My cousin Jack Hichens, Andrew's brother, who was afterwards chairman of the London Stock Exchange, had a place called Beech Grove at Sunningdale, not far off, which still belongs to his children. And sometimes I stayed there too, so that I got to know the neighbourhood well, and acquired a taste for beautiful Surrey which has never left me. My cousin Andrew had a property on the Hog's Back called Monkshatch, and I also went there from time to time. But the greater part of my life was passed in London, immersed in various activities.

Mr. Aïdé wanted to guide me, and I was touched by his kind interest, but I felt from the very beginning of my friendship with him that his temperament was hardly akin to mine. He was too anxious about "What will Society say?" to be the right guide for me. I had to go my own way without thought of the Dowager Duchesses, who were all his intimate friends. I think some of my writings rather shocked him, but to the end of his long life he remained my very good friend. He was a highly accomplished man, but he had not a touch of the greatness that makes men defiant of the conventions. The last time I met him we stayed together in Malfitano, the great house of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Whitaker outside Palermo in Sicily. While there he gave up most of his time to painting. To the end of his life he was full of activity and never lost his love of society. But for his caution I believe he could have been more notable in the arts than he actually was. A lot of talent was his—facile talent.

Among my friends in my London days one who stands out in my memory as singularly individual was Max Beerbohm, now Sir Max Beerbohm. I don't think I have ever met anyone more universally liked by all his friends, and most of his acquaintances, than "Max." I was introduced to him by Reginald Turner, who was intimate with him, and I saw a great deal of him till I ceased almost entirely from living in London. He always called me "Crotchet."

Max was unique.

He did scarcely anything that the average Englishman does. I never heard of his playing any game. I cannot conceive of him running about on a tennis-court, or driving off the tee at golf. My mind falters at the idea of Max galloping on a horse, or sitting at the wheel of a motor-car. I cannot even imagine him playing cards. (He may play cards, but I have never heard of it.) He seemed charmingly contented just to be "Max."

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He lived in Berkeley Street with his very attractive mother and his pathetically kind and understanding half-sister, Constance, and had a sitting-room of his own at the top of the house. Here he spent, I believe, a great part of the week elaborating his precious *The Works of Max Beerbohm*, and in time to come his weekly article on the theatre for the *Saturday Review*. Max wrote slowly, meticulously, critically. I cannot believe he ever bustled, or hurried over anything. He was a dandy in dress, and I seem to remember a marvellous overcoat which he wore one winter, held together by only one tiny button, attached to it in an unexpected place thought out by himself. Perhaps it was owing to his influence that for a time I irritated the musical critics among whom I so often sat by wearing white kid gloves at concerts and sporting a small black ebony cane.

Max was extremely amusing, but always in a quiet way.

One day he said to me, "Do you think, Crotchet, that a word can be beautiful, just one word?"

"Yes," I said. "I can think of several words that seem to me beautiful."

"Ah?"

A pause.

"Then tell me, do you think the word 'ermine' is a beautiful word?"

"Yes," I said. "I like the sound of it very much."

"Ah?"

Another pause.

"And do you think 'vermin' is a beautiful word?"

Max's caricatures are, of course, famous. He did two of me. In one I looked like a slightly overdressed pouter-pigeon and was holding a tea-cup in my hand. My chin jutted out menacingly. He told me that when I was writing I looked "all chin." When I once asked him how he managed to make people look so absurd, and yet so strangely like what they were, he said, "That's easy. I see them as caricatures."

"Do you always see me as a caricature?"

"Yes, always."

I read a good deal of my *Green Carnation* to Max Beerbohm in manuscript. He is, of course, mentioned in it. We stayed together more than once in a charming hotel in a little place I was fond of, St. Margaret's Bay, not far from Dover. It was kept by a lady, a Miss Cumberland, who made us very comfortable and at home. Often I went there to get sea air and complete quiet for writing, and several friends of mine came there too to keep me company. Max and I thought of writing a play together, to be called *The Squirrel*, but, I forget why, we never wrote it, and my first efforts at collaborating took place with the well-known journalist and critic Mr. H. D. Traill, Cosmo Gordon-Lennox and a Mr. Wignell.

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Cosmo Gordon-Lennox, after he had married Marie Tempest, became immersed in theatrical affairs. They had a delightful house close to Regent's Park and very often I enjoyed their hospitality.

Marie Tempest had become tired of playing parts in operettas and musical comedy, she made a success in a play called *English Nell*, and this encouraged her to continue in the career of a comédienne.

One day when I was lunching with them she said, "I wish you two would put your heads together and write a good play for me. I'm sure you could do it. Plenty of humour and the sort of part I could really make something of. I must play another straight part as soon as possible. Write one for me, you two lazybones!"

When we were alone I said to Cosmo, "Let's try it. *The Medicine Man*, in which I collaborated, was a failure, but you've got a strong sense of the theatre. Let's think of something that would suit Marie."

We did think and discuss, and eventually we decided to collaborate on a drama drawn from Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, revolving, of course, round the central character of the rascally but fascinating Becky Sharp.

When we suggested this to Marie she was enthusiastic.

"I know I could play Becky!" she exclaimed. "Go ahead as fast as you can!"

We obeyed, reading it to her scene by scene as we progressed.

At last the play was done and she was satisfied with it. The management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre accepted it for production and the rehearsals began.

Leonard Boyne, very popular at that time, was Rawdon Crawley, and a quite young actor, who afterwards became a power in the theatre, had a small part in which he greatly distinguished himself. His name was Granville-Barker.

I tasted the agonies and joys of theatrical work. I remember very well the final dress rehearsal of our play in the empty theatre. Probably I was overtired. Anyhow, as I sat in the deserted stalls with Cosmo Lennox by my side I believed we were "in" for a failure. I was wrong. The play was enthusiastically received and had a splendid run. Long afterwards I saw that in an interview on her life in the theatre Marie Tempest said that of all the parts she had played "Becky" was the part she liked best.

I have had other successes, and, alas, other failures connected with the stage. The worst, because the most prominent, was the failure of *The Medicine Man* at the Lyceum Theatre, with Ellen Terry and Sir Henry Irving in the cast. This was produced more than three years before *Becky Sharp*. Its non-success was a bad blow. But I was able to take it philosophically. I have never yet had a misfortune which has knocked me out of the ring, to use a boxing metaphor.

My intimacy with Max soon brought me acquaintance with his

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brother, Herbert Beerbohm Tree, already well known and very popular, but not nearly so famous as he afterwards became.

In her fascinating, because so revealing, autobiography, Lady Oxford conveys to me the impression that she has found the society of actors and actresses boring and not worth while. No doubt she prefers politicians. (Some don't. Alphonse Daudet, for instance, detested and even despised them. But he hated dogs too!) She, however, makes a special exception of "the Trees," and I think of two or three others. In my long life I have come across a great many people of the stage, including Madame Ristori, Madame Sarah Bernhardt, Madame Duse, the Bancrofts, Mrs. Langtry, Ellen and Marion Terry, Sir Henry Irving and his two brilliant sons, Ada Rehan, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Doris Kean, Laurette Taylor, Wilson Barrett, Charles Hawtrey, Henry Kemble, Mrs. Kendal and her husband, George Grossmith, Weedon Grossmith, Signoret the French actor, Sir George Alexander, Marie Tempest, and many more. In addition to these I have known, or met without knowing them intimately, Adelina Patti, Madame Albani, Madame Nordica, Madame Emma Eames, Signor Battistini, Giulia Ravogli, and many others of the opera stage. And I cannot say that I have found them more boring than those whom one meets in the society which has nothing to do with the theatre. But I quite agree with Lady Oxford that "the Trees" were outstanding. For Beerbohm Tree was extremely talented, individual, odd, and, in spite of his often vague eyes, full of cleverness, humour and originality. And Mrs., afterwards Lady, Tree was one of the wittiest women in London. I liked them both, but I liked Lady Tree the best, perhaps because I understood her better than I ever understood her husband, who was certainly an arch-*poseur*.

Tree always seemed to me to be acting, both on and off the stage. Even when I was with him in sunlight I felt that he was in limelight.

In consequence of this, although he was invariably kind, and even cordial, to me, I never felt entirely at ease with him. But then he acted much better than I can. He was, I think, sharply aware of himself, at all times very conscious of himself. I never felt in a conversation with him that he was sufficiently interested in what we were talking about entirely to forget what impression his personality was making on me. He struck me as a very entertaining, kind-hearted egoist, at all times conscious that he was performing, and performing with great ability, on the stage of the world. Now and then he did very odd things.

For instance, when the Trees were living in Sloane Street, before the great days of Her Majesty's Theatre, they kindly invited me to a luncheon-party on a Sunday. A good many people, all of them celebrated or very well known, were there, among them Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley and Lady Wolseley.

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Lady Tree received us, but Sir Herbert—they were Mr. and Mrs. then—was absent.

"Where's Herbert?" Mrs. Tree said plaintively once or twice, as if appealing to the universe. "I can't think what Herbert is doing."

Nor could any of us, but we industriously made conversation.

At last, when I began to feel rather hungry and restive, the drawing-room door opened and "Herbert" appeared—bleeding. He had cut himself when shaving, and held a large white silk handkerchief to his face. Mrs. Tree was horrified and I think all of us were sympathetic. But he walked round shaking hands, and bleeding though not profusely, and absolutely refused his wife's entreaties to make use of warm water, sticking-plaster, talc powder, or any remedy for the trouble. And yet all the time his wide-open appealing eyes seemed to be begging us all for sympathy in his irreparable disaster.

During lunch the large white silk handkerchief was in frequent use, until at last the gently trickling streamlet ran dry upon the extremely intelligent face. And all the time I felt that we were all witnessing a performance. Sir Frank Lockwood was one of those present. He had an opportunity for bringing off one of his famous caricatures but I don't know that he took advantage of it.

One day Max Beerbohm said to me, "My brother, Herbert, spoke of you to me the other day."

Naturally enough, I asked what he had said.

"He said you were like me."

"That's a compliment," I said. "But in what way am I like you?"

"Herbert says because in you, as in me, there's more brain than heart, and an entire absence of passion."

"Do you think your brother is a good judge of character?" I asked.

"I leave the decision about that to you," Max replied diplomatically.

Lady Tree struck me as one of the cleverest women I have ever met. In addition to that, she was extremely well educated, even, I should think, learned; but she was clever enough to conceal her learning rather than to exhibit it. She was also very kind-hearted and courageous. Fate gave her a horrible opportunity of showing her courage. For she had a terrible motor accident, which altered her appearance and, without actually disfiguring her, took away much of her physical attraction. After undergoing many operations at the hands of Sir Alfred Fripp she reappeared again on the stage and in society, and I met her at a dinner given by Sir Edgar and Lady Speyer, later, strangely, Mr. and Mrs. Speyer. This was after I had published a book called *The Woman with the Fan*, which deals with the life of a very beautiful woman whose beauty is destroyed in a motor accident. When I came up to welcome Lady Tree she said,

"I'm another woman with a fan now."

Lady Tree's wit was matched by the wit of another brilliant actress,

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Mrs. Patrick Campbell. But I did not get to know her till some years later than the date of the lunch at which Tree used the silk handkerchief. I saw her, however, on the stage of the Adelphi Theatre when she was almost unknown. It was on a first night, and she was acting in a melodrama the part of an almost starving girl. At that time she was intensely thin, as Sarah Bernhardt was in her youth, and had a strange dark beauty. She was already completely self-possessed, as she showed when an unfortunate accident happened. She was playing a scene on the big stage and was dressed almost in rags. In the middle of the scene something keeping her rags together gave way, and they fell down and revealed her in—well, let us say very little. There was a guffaw from the gallery, but Mrs. Campbell, with dominating aplomb, snatched up the rags, folded them quickly round her slim body, and held them together till the scene was finished. She was rewarded with what was probably her first ovation.

The next time I saw her was on the first night of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, when she conquered London. In years to come I knew her exceedingly well and she always called me "Uncle Hitch." But before then we were, I know not why, not on good terms, and when we met she never seemed to know who I was. At a big dinner-party given by Lord and Lady Ripon at Combe, when Lady Ripon said to her, "Mrs. Campbell, surely you know Mr. Hichens!" she replied, "I believe I do, but he always cuts me!"

She was what our old nurse called "a Tartar." But eventually I liked her very much.

I had a rather similar experience with Madame Melba, the famous opera-singer. She detested me for years because of something I put in a book called *The Slave*, which she considered was about her though her name was not mentioned. But we made it up in Egypt, and were the best of friends after that till she died, unfortunately before I had time to profit, as I wished, by her friendship.

Both these women were wonderful women, but both had what are called "tempers."

Thinking of them reminds me of another world-famous, or shall we call it world-notorious, woman whom I met for the first time at a dinner given by Mr. Labouchere, "Labby," and Mrs. Labouchere, at their big house close to the Houses of Parliament.

I dined with them several times, and on this occasion found myself sitting next to a very fluffy little lady tightly encased in a very smart evening gown. I had not caught her name, but I believe she knew who I was, for though presently I had to ask her for her name she did not ask me for mine.

We said a few opening things and presently she observed, "I suppose you know I live at Stratford-on-Avon."

"Really!" I said. "No, I didn't know it."

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She looked, I thought, rather surprised.

"I wouldn't live anywhere else," she said. "I come to London, of course, and I used to live here. But not now! Ah—Stratford-on-Avon!"

She turned her fluffy head and gazed at me with very keen eyes—"Don't you like it?"

"I don't know it," I said.

"You don't know Stratford-on-Avon! Impossible!"

"But I don't—really!"

"The birthplace of Shakespeare! And you a writer! Aren't you?"

"I am," I said, feeling rather ashamed of myself.

"Well then—!"

There was a pause during which she examined me as if I were a specimen of humanity hitherto unknown to her.

"Do you know who *I* am?" she said at length.

"I'm sorry to say I didn't catch your name when Mrs. Labouchere introduced me to you."

"I am Marie Corelli!"

Now I knew! The best seller in the world and the most harshly criticized; also the protector of Shakespeare's reputation.

Miss Corelli was so upset by the lack of knowledge of Shakespeare's birthplace in my education that at the end of the evening she warmly invited me to come down to Stratford and stay with her. I accepted and went, and not only did she very kindly show me everything interesting and Shakespearean in Stratford, but she drove me over in her carriage, drawn by a pair of strapping horses, to see Warwick Castle. The Warwicks were away, but, as she knew them and was known, I suppose, by the servants, we were shown over some of the wonderful rooms and allowed to wander in the lovely grounds.

A little rather characteristic incident occurred before we started on our expedition.

Miss Corelli always lived with a Belgian woman friend, called Miss Bertha Vyver, who seemed usually to play the part of praiser-in-chief of her illustrious companion. When Miss Corelli and I were preparing to go to her carriage Miss Vyver appeared dressed for going out. As soon as Miss Corelli saw her she said,

"Oh no, Bertha! *You're* not coming! Mr. Hichens and I prefer to go alone."

"Oh—I see, Mar-rie! Oh, of course, darling Mar-rie!"

And she hurried upstairs—I suppose to take off her hat.

Miss Vyver was a kind-hearted woman and a very devoted friend. But one day the floodgates were opened just for a minute. For she took me aside, pressed my arm and exclaimed, "Mar-rie is the sweetest and most wonderful being in the world, but—she *has* got a temper!"

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Miss Vyver was right, and Stratford-on-Avon came to know it. So did I—but many years after.

Miss Corelli could not get over the attacks of the critics. Her sales were fantastic for many years, and she must have made a large fortune, but her work was not accepted by the pundits as "literature," and eventually she refused to submit her books for review.

I heard of a comment made by J. M. Barrie on her which amused me. He was with some men friends in a club, and the conversation turned upon books and eventually upon Marie Corelli, who came in for a good deal of abuse. At last somebody sprang to her defence and said,

"Well, anyhow, you must admit that she's got plenty of vitality, that in fact she's very much alive."

"Very much alive—yes," said Barrie musingly. "But you see that's just what we are complaining about."

Another comment of a somewhat similar kind was once made by Henry James about Hugh Walpole.

Henry James lived for a long time at Lamb House, Rye. One day a group of young aspiring authors visited him there and were hospitably entertained. After tea they walked in the garden and gathered eagerly Henry James's views upon the works and the authors of the day. After he had made several pronouncements in his usual roundabout style one of his guests said earnestly,

"And where, Mr. James, would you place Hugh Walpole among rising contemporary writers?"

After a long pause for meditation Mr. James said slowly, "I don't think the time has come—if indeed it should *ever* come—to place poor dear Hugh *anywhere*."

But this somewhat adverse verdict was delivered before Hugh Walpole had attained to the immense success which he enjoyed long before the end of his life.

Arnold Bennett was reported to me to have been rather unkind about Walpole one day at the Garrick Club—I think after Walpole had dedicated a book to him with deep affection.

On being congratulated by a member on this dedication Bennett, who often stammered, remarked,

"Hugh Walpole! A v-v-v-very dear fellow! C-c-c-c-can't write!"

But as we know authors can be terribly frank about brother authors, I never want to hear what they say about me.

Although, while I lived in London, and after I left it but often came back for some weeks or months in the Season, I did not confine my social activities to coteries or "literary circles," but mixed with all sorts of people, I met and knew a good many writers. Among them were Maurice Hewlett, Israel Zangwill, Anthony Hope, A. E. W.

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Mason, E. F. Benson, George Moore, Arthur Symons, G. S. Street, Lucas Malet, Miss Mary Cholmondeley, who had such a great success with *Red Pottage*, Violet Hunt, John Oliver Hobbes, Henry James and others. A. E. W. Mason, a master story-teller, I liked much, and he was kind enough to put me up for the Garrick Club, to which I still belong. Anthony Hope was a delightful man and never "crabbed" other authors. One day as I was walking with him in Park Lane he told me that his great difficulty when writing was to find enough material to write about and keep the book going. I said I suffered from the opposite difficulty. I was inclined to be much too expansive.

George Moore I met rather often at various parties. A certain Lady White gave small evening receptions and he was always at them. I also met him elsewhere and dined in his company several times. He often said very amusing and unexpected things. One night I sat next to him at dinner. This was just after the death of Lord Leighton, who had been the President of the Royal Academy, and who, of course, was known to everyone as a painter. I knew Lord Leighton, and had been to his house two or three times. He had been exceedingly good-looking, and even in his last days had the "remains" of good looks. Often he drove about London in an open victoria.

At this dinner I happened to say to George Moore that I was sorry Lord Leighton was dead.

"I'm not," he said.

"Why? Didn't you like him?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't say that. But I got very tired of seeing him perpetually driving about London looking like a damaged Apollo."

I remember his verdict on the famous French writer Flaubert. I told him that *Madame Bovary* seemed to me the most perfect novel technically that I had ever read.

He raised his drooping eyebrows.

"Technically," he said. "Well, perhaps. Flaubert was a pedagogue —of genius."

Another time we saw a matinée of a play by Ibsen in which Mrs. Patrick Campbell acted. It was called *Little Eyolf*, and in it a crippled child was drowned and the crutch it had carried was found floating. Afterwards we discussed it, and George Moore asked me whether I had noticed that the whole play really centred round one main question. I said that I had not noticed this, and asked what the question was.

"Why didn't they have a nurse?" he answered.

One evening I spent with George Moore was not very agreeable. It was at a supper given by Mrs. Brandon Thomas and Brandon Thomas, the author of *Charley's Aunt*. We were very few—only about six or seven people, I think—and were prepared for a cheery night, when

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the door opened and a very smart young man, whom I knew slightly, and who was to be seen perpetually at parties in London, breezed in.

Directly he saw George Moore he became rigid.

And George Moore seemed to me to turn almost green.

Mrs. Brandon Thomas looked from one to the other in amazement, and then, having mentioned the newcomer's name, said, "This is Mr. George Moore. Do you know him?"

The reply was a freezingly stiff bow, to which George Moore made a spectral reply.

We all did our best, but the evening—night rather—was almost entirely spoilt, for the two men never addressed a word to each other in conversation.

I happened to leave at the same time as the young man who had caused all the trouble. As we got into the lift he said, "Of course you noticed I wouldn't have anything to do with George Moore."

"Of course I did," I said.

"Have you read his book *Celibates*?"

"No," I said.

"Well, there's a disgraceful sketch of me in it. And he actually dares to imply that I live on women."

I said nothing to this. But I remember wondering why the young man hadn't brought an action for libel against Mr. Moore.

Once we were talking about books and George Moore asked me what I was writing. I said I had just finished a book the scene of which was laid in the Bay of Naples. The title of it was *A Spirit in Prison*. To my great surprise he asked me to let him read it in manuscript. I assented with pleasure and sent it to him. He read it with evident care, and forwarded to me a long letter about it. Towards the end of this letter came these words, "At the climax of the book there are really too many sunsets."

I believe I struck one or two of them out.

I liked Mr. Moore as well as admiring him. His appearance was unusual. His pale hair seemed to droop on his head towards his pale eyes, above which the eyebrows drooped and were, as it seemed, echoed by his drooping moustache. Everything tended downwards. He had white fluttering hands, which were often occupied in making small explanatory gestures. Once, on a Sunday, I was driving in a hansom cab up Bond Street, and saw in the distance two small white hands fluttering almost like the wings of a bird. They belonged to a man who was walking beside a lady. I did not recognize the man. I was too far away. But the hands must, I felt, belong to George Moore. I was right. They did. I am convinced he was telling his companion the theme of the novel he was at work on.

His chief woman friend at that time was, I think, Mrs. Charles Hunter, the rich sister of Dame Ethel Smythe, the famous composer,

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writer and humorist. Mrs. Hunter lived for a long time at Hill Hall, Epping, where George Moore often stayed. He dedicated his book *The Brook Kerith* to her. Lady Cunard was another great friend of his and he told me once that he considered her "the cleverest woman in London."

I once had a very odd encounter with Dame Ethel Smythe. It took place after a concert in the Albert Hall conducted by Herr Furtwängler. As Herr Furtwängler was a friend of mine, after the concert I went behind the platform to congratulate him on his success—and the orchestra's. Several people were there, among them Dame Ethel, whom I did not know, and who seemed to be in a state of great excitement. Herr Furtwängler, who was surrounded, hurriedly introduced me to her.

"Ha!" she said, seizing me by the arm and drawing me a little aside. "I wanted to see you! You're just the man I wanted to see!"

I felt pleased and proud.

"Tell me now," she added, "you're the chief trombone in the orchestra, aren't you?"

"No," I said, almost stupefied by the attribution.

"Are you, or are you not, the chief trombone in the orchestra?"

"No!" I said emphatically. "I'm not. My name's Robert Hichens."

She dropped my arm as if she had been stung, turned and hurried away from me.

That was my only personal encounter with Dame Ethel. Not a very successful one. But I accompanied Mrs. Charles Hunter and George Moore to hear in a box her clever opera called *The Boatswain's Mate*. And I have read all her books with interest and admiration. The sketch in, I think, her *Streaks of Life*, called "An Adventure in the Train," is one of the most colossally amusing things I have ever read. She is an admirable writer, as her brilliant autobiography *Impressions that Remained* proves. I sometimes wish that she had not taken me for a trombone-player, though the trombone is a very effective instrument.

During the period of my work for the *World* I had always two stalls in the second row close to the orchestra allotted to me, and I was at Covent Garden nearly every night. Fortunately I have always been exceedingly fond of opera, and it was a perpetual joy to me to hear the stars who sang in those nights upon the Covent Garden stage. In my time I have heard in opera Patti, Albani, Sembrich, Trebelli, Giulia Ravogli, Scalchi, Destinn, Melba, Sigrid Arnoldson, Calvé, Tetrazzini, Emma Eames, Tamagno, Alvarez, Jean and Edouard de Reszke, Plançon, Caruso, Battistini, Bonci, de Lucia, Cremonini, and how many others, among them that stupendous artist Chaliapine, equally great as singer and actor.

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I heard Patti in *La Traviata*, which she sang in the first act covered from head to foot with, as I was assured, genuine diamonds. Caruso was tremendous in the last act of *Carmen*. Calvé was the best of all Carmens. The most powerful tenor voice I ever heard was Tamagno's. When he exerted it to what I must call "full blast" he nearly lifted me from my stall. Many of the singers on arriving in England left cards on me, but I knew personally only a few. I could have known them all but was afraid that such knowledge would make complete freedom in the writing of my articles difficult.

Madame Albani, as it happened, I had known before I joined the *World*, and my friendship with her and her family was always kept up.

She invited me once to dinner on her birthday. I found there Prince Leiningen, Sir Arthur Sullivan, Lionel Monckton, Sir Henry Hozier, the father of Mrs. Winston Churchill, and several other people. After dinner in the drawing-room Madame Albani consented to sing, and Sir Arthur Sullivan took his seat at the grand piano. We all sat down, and it happened that I was next to Sir Henry Hozier, who was sunk in a deep armchair. On my other side was Madame Albani's sister-in-law, Miss Gye. First Madame Albani sang Sullivan's charming song, "Orpheus with his lute," and one or two other things. Then, to finish up, she told us she was going to sing a very old favourite of a vast public, Braga's "Serenade," with a violin obbligato. It was during this that a small tragedy occurred. While the hostess was breathing out softly the mellifluous measures which had entranced thousands of sentimentalists, Sir Henry Hozier fell fast asleep.

But not only that—he snored, and his snore was powerful. Hearing this unexpected accompaniment blending with the strains of the violin, Madame Albani looked round and raised her eyebrows. Sir Henry slept on and snored on. Then Miss Gye whispered to me, "Please wake him up! Pinch him and wake him up!"

I barely knew Sir Henry, who was an elderly and important man. How could I pinch him?

I shook my head.

"Well then, shake him! Give him a good shake!"

This time I obeyed, stretched out my hand, got hold of a coat-sleeve and pulled at it. A loud snort was the immediate response, and as I drew my hand away, feeling guilty, Sir Henry's eyes looked in astonishment into mine. I expected him to say the usual "Where am I?" but he didn't. He only gave another, and softer snort, sat up, and we heard the few remaining bars of the song undisturbed.

Madame Albani was an amazingly hard worker, as she not only sang regularly in opera, but also gave concerts all over the British Isles, and was for years the chief soprano star in all the big performances of oratorio. She also sang on the Continent from time to time. She had some of the tricks of the popular prima donna, but in private life she

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was one of the kindest and least conceited of women. Queen Victoria was devoted to her. The last time I can remember meeting her was at a Royal garden-party given by King George the Fifth and Queen Mary at Windsor Castle, where she was singled out from the huge throng for the special honour of having tea in the Royal tent. She made great sums of money, but towards the end of her life she had financial misfortunes, and I'm afraid that she was almost poor when she died. She was a Roman Catholic and deeply religious.

Caruso I often heard singing, but I never knew him. The then Duchess of Sutherland, later Millicent Duchess of Sutherland, perhaps the most absolutely charming woman in the London world of that time, and very beautiful into the bargain, told me a funny story showing how appallingly natural Caruso could be wherever he was.

She and the Duke gave a big dinner-party at Stafford House and it happened that Caruso was placed exactly opposite to her at dinner. Towards the end of the meal she happened to look across the table at him, and on catching her eye he made a hideous grimace. She was extremely startled, and for a moment thought that either he must have drunk too much or have gone mad. She looked away, but presently could not resist glancing again at him. This time he made an even more frightful grimace at her, and as she continued to stare at him varied it, and excelled himself in contortions. She then once more looked away, and almost directly dinner was over she got up to go into the drawing-room.

When the men presently came in, Caruso walked up to her, smiling, and said in Italian, or French—I forget which, "Well, Duchess, how did you like it?"

"What do you mean, Signor! Are you crazy?"

"Not at all!"

"Then why did you make those awful grimaces at me?"

"I thought things were getting a little bit dull, and wanted to liven you up."

"That," the Duchess said, after telling me the story, "was Caruso's comment upon my dinner-party."

The Marchioness of Ripon was the chief instigator, helped by Mr. Harry Higgins, of the grand revival of the glories of opera in London in my time. She was there almost every night in her box on the left as one looked towards the stage. And she knew and made much of nearly all the great singers. But definitely she had her favourites. Tetrazzini, who was brought over from South America to hold candles to Madame Melba, was certainly not one of them, though she had an enormous success with the public, and on her first appearance in *La Traviata* was called after the first act about twenty times. Once when I was in Lady Ripon's box I spoke of Tetrazzini, and Lady Ripon said,

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"Well, I can't bear her. I think she sings like a dwarf in a gramophone!"

Madame Tetrazzini was by no means a giantess and she was not as slim as—shall we say Madame Pavlova? But she could certainly sing, especially coloratura music. Her vocal agility was astonishing, and she was supremely self-possessed when she was before the public.

Once I went to hear her sing in the Albert Hall, which was crammed. I sat in the front row of the orchestra stalls, and next to me was an elderly lady who quite evidently had a cold.

When Tetrazzini came on to sing her first aria and, having been rapturously received, was just opening her lips to begin, this lady gave vent to a terrific sneeze. Quite unperturbed, Tetrazzini bowed to her, said in English, "Bless you, my de-ar!" and then calmly burst into song.

The only other instance I noticed of such intimacy existing in public between a performer and the audience was exhibited by von Pachmann, the supreme pianist in the music of Chopin. At a concert, also in the Albert Hall, he completed his published programme with one of Chopin's best known works. When he had finished it frantic applause burst forth, and as he got up to bow and to pretend he was leaving the platform a number of enthusiastic women gathered round him and the piano, clapping and crying shrilly, "Encore! Encore!" This seemed to intoxicate the little man, for he played again and again, and finally, springing up from the piano-stool, he seized the nearest woman—she happened to be an elderly lady with grey hair—put an arm round her waist, took hold of her right hand, and did, or attempted to do, several valse steps, while she, her hat awry, made a ridiculous effort to match him. The audience roared with laughter, the applause became deafening, and the great little showman at last broke away, flung up his arms and staggered off the platform.

I happen to know that von Pachmann was a deliberate showman, for a Greek friend of mine knew him well, and several times before a concert heard him say what he was going to do on the platform to startle and entertain the audience.

A showman! But he could play! As the Americans say, "He could deliver the goods." He gave me moments of quite exquisite pleasure.

King Edward the Seventh as Monarch and Prince of Wales must have been genuinely fond of the opera. He sat always in the omnibus box on the ground floor of the opera-house, which he shared with several men, among them his son, afterwards George the Fifth, Mr. Christopher Sikes, Lord Lathom of the mighty beard, and others. And not seldom he was the first to arrive in the box, came in quite alone, and listened attentively to the music. During the intervals he used his opera-glasses almost incessantly, sweeping the great house from box to

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box. His keen curiosity to inform himself about who was there was obvious. Queen Alexandra sat in the big Royal box on the first tier, and she too was devoted to opera. But she also liked chamber music, and I saw her several times sitting in the front row at St. James's Hall, listening to Joachim and Norman Neruda. More than once Signor Tosti, the Italian song-writer, was in her party. All the Royal Family were fond of Tosti, who was a delightful *enfant terrible* and simply couldn't help saying whatever jumped into his mind, however unorthodox it was. I met him a good many times and never heard him speak English, though he had lived in England for many years. There was nothing of the snob in Tosti. He was just the same man with a Neapolitan fiacre-driver as he was with an English Royalty. He had a few faults, like most of us, but all *his* faults were forgiven—though he never asked pardon for them. His wife, Lady Tosti, had been an agreeable singer, and was a highly cultivated woman who thoroughly understood her wayward husband. They had an apartment in Rome when I was living there, and I often dined in their company. After her husband's death I met Lady Tosti on the Nile. She confessed that she missed him very much.

"I have no one to forgive now!" she once said to me rather sadly.

Lady Ripon's admiration of Madame Melba's beautiful singing—"she sang like an inspired choir-boy," someone said to me—made her, I thought, rather cruelly critical of other fine singers. One season in London Geraldine Farrar, sensationally famous in America, came over to London. She was not engaged at the opera, but she was heard more than once in private, and specially wished to be heard by Lady Ripon, who pulled all the strings at Covent Garden. Reynaldo Hahn, the South American singer and composer, who was often in London in those days, gave an afternoon party in Piccadilly for Miss Farrar, and invited all those who "mattered" to hear her. I went to it, and of course Lady Ripon and Harry Higgins were there. Miss Farrar sang several times and, I thought, extremely well, but nothing came of it. Lady Ripon didn't care about her, didn't want her. Madame Melba must not be interfered with. And Miss Farrar had no chance. She was very vexed about this.

Although eventually I liked Madame Melba very much, and we became friends, I could not help knowing how almost fiercely jealous she was of other singers, when they were women. One day when I was walking alone with her I was foolish enough to mention the name of the famous Austrian soprano, Madame Jeritza. She turned upon me wrathfully.

"Do you really mean to tell me," she exclaimed, "that you consider *that* woman an artist? I thought you knew something about singing."

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On another occasion I mentioned Madame Albani to her. (Madame Albani had a habit, when she was singing, of twisting her mouth to one side.)

"Albani," said Madame Melba, "can't utter a note without making a grimace like this!"

And she made a face that was like a savage caricature of Albani singing.

Melba must have been a good enemy, but she could also be a good and a generous friend. And when she forgave me she did it with delightful open-heartedness.

She held out both hands to me.

"You've been a brute to me!" she exclaimed. "You wrote in a book that I trundled my lovers about in a wheelbarrow, or something of that sort, but I can't keep up this silly quarrel any longer. Let's be friends!"

And we were friends from that moment.

After we were reconciled I told her something that I think really pleased her. She had an exquisite voice, beautifully produced, and her high shake was the most perfect perhaps that I ever heard, but she never thrilled me in moments where passion was needed as Albani could and did. Nevertheless, when she sang the part of Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust* there was one passage that she sang more exquisitely than any other singer I ever heard. This occurred at the first entrance of Marguerite, when Faust stops her and speaks to her for the first time and she will not stay with him, but tells him she is not a lady and goes on her way. She only has to sing a few bars, but she sang them with a simplicity that was divine and that I have never forgotten, and can never forget. I told her this and she seemed really touched.

"When I sang Marguerite on the Continent," she said, "Nikisch, the great conductor, was in the audience and heard me. After the performance he came to see me and told me that, after hearing me in the passage you mention, he wished to conduct me. He said he had never heard that little bit sung as I sang it."

"No wonder!" I said.

She promised to sing for me in private at Louxor when we were there at the same time, and the date was arranged. Bemberg, the composer, and a great friend of hers, was to accompany her. But when the day came she was ill and could not sing.

That was my loss.

I shall always have a warm feeling of affection and admiration for Dame Nellie Melba. She died in Australia, her homeland, after a long and mysterious illness.

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VII

DURING the London years that followed the publication of *The Green Carnation* my life was very full, and to me very interesting. Gradually I came to know a great many people, and my collection of friends and acquaintances was very varied. At that time London, especially during the Season, was an exceedingly brilliant city in which those who had money to spend, and even those who had little money but kind-hearted and rich friends, managed to have a remarkably good time. I was not rich, but I was at any rate self-supporting, and could make my own way without any more financial help from my father, who was always living near Canterbury. Eventually he was made an honorary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral, and had to preach occasionally in its pulpit.

All my books were at first published by Mr. Heinemann, with whom I was always on good terms. They were fairly successful. Many people liked *Flames*, and in America the sale of it lasted a long time although it was never sensational. A wildly comic book which I wrote in a fit of high spirits amused many people. It was called *The Londoners* and went into a good many editions. Later I tried to repeat its success with *The Prophet of Berkeley Square*, but that was a failure. I published three collections of short stories and did well with them. One called *Tongues of Conscience* brought me great praise and the friendship of William Sharp, whose critical work was brilliant and whose totally different work, which he published under the pseudonym of "Fiona Macleod," brought him many admirers. But he never acknowledged that he was Fiona Macleod, and told me that she was a woman he knew well and who preferred to live in obscurity. Not only that. He actually took a woman down with him to spend the day with George Meredith at Flint Cottage near Dorking, and introduced her to him as Fiona Macleod. I know this because George Meredith's daughter, Mrs. Sturges, whom I knew, and who was supping with me one night in London, told me about the visit, and said that she couldn't believe Mr. Sharp would have tricked her father, whom he almost worshipped.

"Do you really believe William Sharp and Fiona Macleod are the same person?" she asked me.

I was obliged to say that I knew they were. This was after Mr. Sharp's death. In spite of his denials, I had long been almost sure he was Fiona Macleod. And Mrs. Sharp eventually told me my suspicion was well founded. On one occasion in Sicily he wrote me a letter asking me, as his friend, to deny that he was Fiona Macleod, which had been rumoured in the place where we were both spending the winter, and asserting on his honour that Fiona was a woman friend of his for whose literary business he was responsible.

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Mrs. Sharp told me that if it became known that he was Fiona Macleod he was certain he could not go on writing the strangely poetical and beautiful work with which the name was associated. Therefore to the end of his life he persisted in asserting that she lived, that he knew her intimately, and that she was a fascinating, but very strange, woman. He even described her appearance. A good many people believed that he was in love with her.

William Sharp was a very great friend of Alexander Nelson Hood, who became Duke of Bronte, and he died at Maniace Castle and was buried in the grounds there. Several times I stayed at the Castle in the company of him and his wife. He was one of the most interesting men I have ever met, and very kind-hearted. But I don't think he could always be believed when he stated things as facts, or told stories of his adventures. He had a romantic imagination, and sometimes it got the better of him. He it was who persuaded me to stick to *The Garden of Allah* as the title of that book. I had thought of perhaps giving it the name "Man's Heart in the Desert."

One of the reasons why I came to believe that William Sharp was Fiona Macleod was this. One afternoon when we were walking together on a mountain in Sicily he began talking to me about the Hebrides, which he knew intimately, and described an occasion when, swimming alone in the sea off one of the Islands, he came upon a seal apparently sleeping on the water. The sound of his approach, he said, woke it, and it sank down into the depths with its eyes fixed upon him. His description was so vivid, and so like a passage I had once read in one of Fiona Macleod's published writings, that I said to myself, "I am walking with Fiona Macleod." Soon after this, at Christmas, he gave me as a present a poem "By Fiona Macleod."

"Tell me what you think of it when you have read it," he said.

I thought it very beautiful and expressed my admiration warmly.

For a moment he looked embarrassed. He even flushed. And after an instant of silence he said in a constrained voice, "I'm glad you like it. I shall tell Miss Macleod."

I thought, "You needn't do that. She knows already what I think."

But I never gave him the least hint of my conviction that he had written the poem.

Whether he ever suspected that I had guessed his secret I don't know.

Another literary friend of mine wrote two novels anonymously. She was a woman, and her books were extremely popular and had very large sales.

One day, when I was discussing anonymity with her, she confessed that she had twice published books without putting her name to them.

"No one guessed I had written them," she said.

"I wonder whether I ever read them," I said.

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She then, after a pledge of secrecy, told me their names, and I said I had read them both.

One of them came out during the war of 1914-1918, and had an enormous sale. The other was also very successful. She is dead now, but as I promised her I would never tell anyone she wrote them I must not even now give her away.

I had one other surprise about a novel that came out with a *nom de guerre* attached to it, but as the real author's name is now common property I can mention it.

A great many years ago Mr. Heinemann brought out a book called *Maurice Guest*, by "Henry Handel Richardson." I read a review of it, and finding it dealt with the life of musical students in Leipzig, I bought it.

I was amazed by its power and by the marvellously subtle drawing of character in it. It was dedicated "To Louise," and Louise was the name of the woman round whom the tragedy of it—for it was a terrible tragedy—was built. I still think it a really great novel. And I sat down and wrote to Heinemann congratulating him on having discovered such a wonderful new writer.

In answer he wrote to say that he had shown my letter to "Mr. Richardson," who was willing to meet me, if I would promise not to tell anyone what his real name was. If I agreed to this, would I come to lunch with him on a certain day? I promised, and went to his flat on the day appointed.

I found Heinemann with his partner, Mr. Pawling.

"Is *he* coming?" I asked.

"Yes. He'll be here in a moment," said Heinemann. "But don't be surprised if he's rather shy."

"Shy!" I said. "Well, his book isn't shy. It's one of the boldest books I have read in years."

"Authors sometimes seem quite unlike their books," he said, with a mischievous smile.

Just then the door opened and a thin, pale, serious-looking woman walked in.

"So we are to be five, are we?" I thought.

But Heinemann, having shaken hands with the newcomer, said to me:

"Let me introduce you to Henry Handel Richardson."

That was the beginning of my acquaintance, deepening into friendship, with the lady who has since written *The Getting of Wisdom*, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, in three big volumes having separate titles, and *The Young Cosima*, which gives in novel form a remarkable description of the drama worked out between Hans von Bülow, Cosima von Bülow, and Richard Wagner, whose second wife Madame von Bülow became, as all the world knows.

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In my time among a crowd of novels there have been three which I think ought to live. I set aside the novels of George Meredith and Thomas Hardy, which I look upon already as acknowledged classics. My three are *Maurice Guest*, Arnold Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tale*, and Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*.

Henry Handel Richardson has been long since known as Mrs. Robertson, the wife, now the widow, of Professor Robertson, celebrated as a great authority upon German literature and a professor at the University of London.

After my first meeting with Mrs. Robertson I asked Mr. J. A. Spender, the editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, a famous political and literary newspaper, to allow me to write an article on *Maurice Guest*. He agreed and I wrote one.

Alfred Spender and Mrs. Spender were great friends of mine for many years and I became much attached to both of them. Alfred was the finest journalist I have ever met, fair, incorruptible, high-minded and full of knowledge. He had for many years a predominant influence in the Liberal Party, and was consulted by such men as Lord Oxford when Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, and other Ministers. He sought nothing for himself. I believe he was offered a baronetcy and refused it.

He belonged to the highest type of Englishman and was universally respected throughout his long life.

Mrs. Spender was also remarkable, though in a quite different way. She was clever, tremendously energetic, and had a fiery mind. Her likes and dislikes were strong, and she expressed them freely and with force. Fear she had none. For more years than I can count now she toiled unceasingly at work for the hospitals, and even ran a hospital herself at Tankerton, near Whitstable on Sea. As I had a week-end cottage there I was able to see for myself what splendid work she was doing, and we were often together during the war of 1914-1918.

Like Alfred Spender, when it came to a question of doing good for humanity she was selfless. Alfred is dead, but she is still alive as I write these lines. And I must pay my tribute to her. She had the very rare quality of moral courage. And this was shared to the full by her husband. Both of them suffered at times because of this, but they held on their course unswervingly.

I was never on the staff of the *Westminster Gazette*, but I wrote an article for it occasionally. When it died, London suffered a loss which was keenly felt by many of us.

It was the late Lord Burnham, proprietor and director of the *Daily Telegraph*, who caused me to be certain that I didn't want to stay in London permanently as a hard-working journalist. After *Flames* was published a connection of his called at my little flat one day, and said that Lord Burnham had read *Flames* and would like to have a talk

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with me. Would I go down one morning to the office of the *Telegraph* and see him? I said I would go with pleasure. An appointment was fixed and I went, and saw Lord Burnham alone.

He received me very kindly, put me at once at my ease, and told me why he had sent for me.

"I have read your book, *Flames*," he said. "And I should like you to join the staff of the *Daily Telegraph*. I am sure you could do big descriptive articles for me. I'll tell you exactly why."

He then alluded to a descriptive passage I had written in *Flames* dealing with one of the great ballets at the Empire Theatre produced by Katti Lanner.

"That's the sort of stuff my paper wants," he said. "Of course, I know you are a journalist already. Why not continue your career in connection with the *D.T.*? It's good enough, isn't it?"

His agate-like eyes twinkled.

For a moment I was dumb from astonishment. I had never expected this and didn't know what to say. The offer was naturally flattering, yet immediately I felt a strong reluctance to accept it which I could scarcely understand.

"Good enough?" I said. "This offer is far better than anything I expected."

He then told me that if I joined the staff permanently, and was willing to do whatever he asked me to do, he would pay me a salary of two thousand pounds a year.

This was rather more than I was making at that time by my journalistic work and the writing of novels and short stories. Nevertheless my lips refused to say, "I accept your offer." And, uncomfortably, I asked for time to think the matter over.

Whether Lord Burnham was surprised by my hesitation or not I don't know. He didn't show any surprise. His rosy face continued to look perfectly calm, indeed almost paternal, and he told me to take as much time as I liked. His offer would hold good. And he added that if I joined his staff he would not object to my writing about music on another paper if I wished to. We parted cordially and I went out into Fleet Street with my mind in a blaze.

I took a few days—I forget now how many—to think over this certainly wonderful offer. They were days of acute mental debate. I saw myself thoroughly established as a successful journalist, well off, prosperous. Happy? Perhaps! To refuse such an offer would surely be foolish. I might never have such another chance in the career of journalism. But did I want to be always a journalist? Did I want to be swallowed up by the newspapers? Did I want to be tied for ever to London?

At that time I really loved London and London life. Most of my friends were there. Nearly all my interests were centred in London.

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And yet I felt, and continued to feel, an almost insurmountable aversion from being, as it were, fastened permanently to London and London life.

I could, of course, go on writing novels if I joined the *Daily Telegraph*. Lord Burnham wouldn't prevent me. But should I have time to work on my books? Could I possibly do justice to myself in the two careers? The writing of books didn't as yet bring me in very much money, but still I had had some success. I felt that I should hate to become only a journalist. But—and there was the difference!—I felt I should not hate at all to become only a novelist. And the end of it was that I refused Lord Burnham's kind offer and decided to take my chance as a novelist, and not to remain permanently in journalism.

The chief firm of literary agents in London at that time, Messrs. Watt & Son, communicated with me and asked me whether I would care to put my literary business into their hands. They were confident that they could greatly increase my earnings if I did so, and Mr. Watt *père* would like very much to have a talk with me if I cared to meet him. They believed that I had no literary agent to manage my business.

This was true. I had never even thought of having an agent.

Although I was well known now as a novelist, and was supposed to be successful, as I was not making a great deal of money Mr. Watt's obvious belief in my future impressed me sufficiently to induce me to accept his suggestion. I therefore went to his office in Norfolk Street, Strand, and had a long talk with him.

On that day I saw the head of the firm only, so far as I remember, the father of my present agent, Mr. Alick Watt.

He was a very serious-looking Scotsman, who wore spectacles and had an extremely quiet manner. Already he acted for many of the most famous writers of the day, whose signed photographs hung on his office walls. Among them was Mr. Rudyard Kipling.

Mr. Watt asked me what I earned by my books. I told him frankly. He said quietly, "I can much more than double that if you come to me, although you will have to pay my firm ten per cent. on whatever you earn through my good offices."

The end of it all was that I was persuaded by Mr. Watt and decided to test him as my literary agent. I have never regretted this, and the Watt firm acts for me to this day, though there is no binding contract between us.

Almost as soon as Mr. Watt took charge of my business affairs my finances became much more prosperous. I wrote a series of books for Messrs. Methuen, beginning with *Felix*, and continuing with *The Woman with the Fan*, *The Garden of Allah*, *The Call of the Blood*, and other books, one of which, a best seller, *Bella Donna*, was issued by the Heinemann firm, and had no reason to regret what I had done.

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But before all this happened I had still much ground to cover in London.

One thing I did before I became very prosperous was not specially to my credit as a self-respecting artist. It was this.

Among my many friends and acquaintances of the theatre was Wilson Barrett, an actor who had for a long time a great deal of success, then a good deal of misfortune, and finally again a big money-making triumph with a play called *The Sign of the Cross*, which I believe brought him a fortune. He followed this up with a play called *The Daughters of Babylon*, which he produced in London. I saw it once and I remember that the scenery of it was remarkable. I liked Wilson Barrett as a man, but as an actor he did not appeal much to me. He had a curious habit of emphasizing the wrong words in dialogue and he was too staccato and melodramatic for my taste.

After the run of *The Daughters of Babylon* was over he came to me and asked me to turn it into a book. He said he was sure it would sell and offered me five hundred pounds down if I would "undertake the job." I ought to have refused, but at that time I hadn't very much money, and after reading the play, which he gave me, I said I would do it. He wrote me a cheque for five hundred pounds and in eight weeks the book was written.

I was surprised and amused some years afterwards to hear from Miss Katherine Lewis, the delightfully clever and humorous daughter of the famous solicitor Sir George Lewis and dear Lady Lewis, who was beloved by almost everyone who was admitted to her intimacy, that Sir James Barrie had added the book to his library. She went to tea with him and happened to mention me, and he went to a bookshelf and came back with *The Daughters of Babylon*.

"Have you read this?" he said.

"No. Who is it by?"

"Robert Hichens."

She looked at the title. "Mr. Hichens writing about Babylon!" she exclaimed. "What on earth can *he* know about it?"

"Apparently a very great deal," said Barrie, with his humorous twinkle. "He's quite exhaustive on the subject."

Miss Lewis took it away and she has sworn to me that she managed to get through it.

I try to believe her.

I knew Barrie, but never well. His wife, afterwards Mrs. Gilbert Cannan, was a very pretty actress called May Ansell, and I knew her when she was acting in *Walker, London*, which, I believe, was Barrie's first long play. After she became engaged to be married to Barrie she gave a party to introduce him to her many friends. I went to this party and there met Barrie for the first time. He was one of the quietest men I have ever encountered, and totally free from conceit or

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vanity, a truly lovable being. I don't think he was at all greedy for money. But everything, or almost everything, he, as it were, touched seemed to turn into gold. I heard that one day he came to his wife with an enormous cheque which represented his royalties from America, and said to her plaintively,

"Look at this, Mary! What on earth are we to do with this?"

I met at this time, after I was thirty, many clever and entertaining people. One of the most characteristic and amusing was Mr. Henry Labouchere, the owner of *Truth*, the rival paper to the *World*, and famous in Parliament. I never heard him make a speech, but I met him at several dinners, dined with him more than once, and used sometimes to visit at his house on a Sunday afternoon.

Sir Bruce and Lady Seton gave many big dinners in their home, Durham House, Chelsea, and Mr. Labouchere and his wife often went there. So did I. For they were very hospitable and never weary of entertaining. And there and elsewhere I heard Mr. Labouchere talk and enjoyed it.

Like Sir Thomas Lipton, but in an entirely different vein, he was almost always amusing. He talked quietly, sometimes even with a slow sort of drawl, unemphatically, often cynically, and humour flickered perpetually over his talk.

One evening I had a conversation with him about Madame Adelina Patti, the great opera-singer, with whom he used now and then to stay at her castle in Wales. She was married three times. Her second husband was Nicolini, an operatic tenor. Mr. Labouchere described to me a visit at which Nicolini was the host. I asked what he was like, as I did not know him.

"A sportsman!" said Mr. Labouchere. "An ardent sportsman!"

This surprised me, for I had seen Nicolini and heard him sing, and he certainly had not looked like a sportsman.

"Really! And what sport does he excel in?"

"He's a remarkable fisherman for trout."

"Ah!"

"There is a trout stream that runs through the castle grounds, and while I was there—he fished."

"Did he catch much?"

"Things were arranged in this way. When the day came for the opening of Nicolini's fishing season a small stretch of water was netted off from the rest of the stream. A large quantity of trout was then procured from a breeding school, or whatever they call it, and they were inserted into the Nicolini stretch. He then assumed a special fishing costume designed by himself."

"What was it like?"

"Have you ever seen the opera of *Faust*?"

"Yes, often."

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"It resembled Faust's costume when he is transformed from an old into a young man."

"Good heavens!"

"There was a hat and feathers."

"For fishing?"

"Yes."

"Help!" I murmured.

"Nicolini placed it on his head and went valiantly forth with rod and line."

"Did he fish alone? Was no one with him?"

"Not a soul. But on the opposite bank there were beaters."

"To drive the trout towards his hook?"

"Possibly."

"And Madame Patti? Didn't she come to witness his prowess?"

"A fishing house had been built by the stream midway of the netted stretch of water. Madame Patti was seated there book in hand."

"Ah! She was a reader, then!"

"A reader? Well!"

He paused for a moment and then added, "She had the respect of the savage for printed matter."

Although I talked with Mr. Labouchere several times when other people were there I only once had a conversation alone with him, and that happened by chance. One Sunday afternoon, soon after I had dined with his wife and him at their house, I paid a duty call. The door was opened by a young footman whom I had never seen before, and I asked if Mrs. Labouchere was at home. Without answering he made a gesture to me to come in, and showed me into a room like a library. In it I found Mr. Labouchere apparently unpacking a case which contained a quantity of papers. He was in shirt-sleeves.

He looked up, evidently surprised at my advent.

"Hullo!" he said.

"I'm afraid there's a mistake," I said. "I came to call on Mrs. Labouchere."

"She's out of town. She's gone to the country. And I'm just back from Northampton," he said, shaking my hand. "I've been there to make speeches to my precious constituents. Come and sit down. And I'll put on my jacket."

I begged him to let me go and said I wouldn't disturb him. But he insisted on my staying. And I had a talk with him of about half an hour, during which he gave me a very humorous account of the people he represented in Parliament.

"Can they possibly understand *you*?" I said, perhaps with a touch of irony.

"Quite impossible! Quite impossible!" he said. "But why should they? It's surely enough if I understand them."

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Mr. Labouchere seemed to me a very kind man, in spite of his perhaps cynical, and certainly ironical, mind. Many years afterwards I knew rather well his clever daughter in Rome. She was then Marchesa di Rudini. But I had met her when she was a schoolgirl. For one day when I arrived at the Laboucheres to dine, Mrs. Labouchere said to me, "Your lady has failed. Do you mind taking in our daughter? She's only sixteen."

Of course I said I should be delighted, and I was presented to Miss Dora, an exceedingly pretty girl, who proved to be already an accomplished woman of the world. Our conversation ranged over many subjects and she was never at sea. She had evidently been born into the world without a trace of shyness.

Among friends of my earlier days who came up to London for the Season were the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, with his wife and daughter. They had a large house in Great Cumberland Place, and often asked me to go there. The Bishop used to sit in the House of Lords and took his part in ecclesiastical affairs. But Mrs. and Miss Ellicott were far more interested in things musical, literary and theatrical, though Mrs. Ellicott enjoyed also entertaining, and being entertained by, more solemn people of importance. During one season a rather absurd luncheon took place in their house. There were only five people at it, the Bishop, Mrs. Ellicott, Miss Ellicott, a very well-known provincial actress and myself. The actress considered herself, and was considered, a "star," but only in the Provinces. I never heard of her acting in London. She was large and genteel. I met her at this lunch for the first time.

She had discovered before coming that the Bishop was a Lord Bishop and was therefore "My Lord," and when we sat down to lunch she persistently addressed him as "My dear Lord," and spoke of him to us as "My Lord" and "His Lordship."

"As My Lord has just said," and "as His Lordship so pertinently remarks," were phrases that dropped from her lips with embarrassing profusion. But the social climax came when she suddenly raised Mrs. Ellicott to the Peerage and, turning towards her, said, "Tell us, dear Lady Ellicott, whether you agree with His Lordship. As for you, my dear Lady Rosalind"—Rosalind was Miss Ellicott's Christian name —"I can see by your expression that you were on His Lordship's side in this matter."

The butler and footman who were waiting on us seemed to have great difficulty in concealing their astonishment, but the actress was quite unaware that anything was wrong, and continued to distribute titles to left and right, while the Episcopal family endeavoured to look unimpressed by the honours unexpectedly showered upon them. When at three o'clock she took her elaborate departure the Bishop said to his wife in his thin, light voice, "Well, my dear, I hope you

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are satisfied at last! Hitherto I have always been uncomfortable in having a title which you could not share."

Mrs. Ellicott burst into uncontrollable laughter and exclaimed, "And Rosalind too! The generosity of it! Largesse! Truly royal largesse!"

During that same season the Ellicotts gave a big dinner-party at which Mr. George Grossmith was engaged to entertain the company after dinner. Unfortunately a young man who was there drank a good deal too much, and while Mr. Grossmith was wildly warbling "You should see me dance the polka!" to his own pianoforte accompaniment, this guest lay with extended legs sprawling in his armchair and seemed anxious to act as chorus. On a sign from the Bishop one of the company—I think the Ellicotts' son-in-law, Mr. Travers—gently conducted him out of the room.

In the autumn of that year the Gloucester Musical Festival took place and the Ellicotts kindly invited me to join the house-party at the Palace for it. I accepted, and arrived in Gloucester on the afternoon before it opened.

Among those staying at the Palace were Lord and Lady Edward Spencer Churchill, the Lord Chief Justice of England and Lady Coleridge, the Dowager Lady Westbury, Mr., afterwards Sir Henry, Hadow, Mr. Lewis Morris the poet, Mr. Haweis the well-known London clergyman and musical critic, Mr. Napier Miles and his mother, and two or three others. Mr. Lewis Morris and Mr. Haweis were two of those whom I had mentioned in my *Green Carnation*. The Bishop was not present. He didn't care for music and had fled to Bel Alp.

We had a very enjoyable Festival and I went to all the seven performances. Every day a crowd of people was invited to lunch at the Palace, and on the first day Mrs. Ellicott said to me,

"After the service at the Cathedral today I want you to look after Professor and Mrs. Huxley at luncheon. Bring them over to the Palace during the interval—I'll introduce you to them. See that they have everything they want."

I was rather alarmed at the prospect of the great Professor Huxley, but I needn't have been. Both he and his wife were delightfully simple and cordial in their manners, and both of them talked mainly about the music we were going to have during the week, a subject in the discussion of which I was fortunately able fairly to hold my own.

Nor was the Lord Chief Justice overwhelming. Lady Coleridge was a pretty young woman, who reminded me of a robin, and Lord Coleridge, who obviously adored her—she was his second wife—seemed in the best of spirits, and gave me the benefit of a great deal of his silver-tongued talk. One day, when we were discussing the programme of the day, he told me of one of Her Majesty's Judges

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whom he called "a learned brother of mine," and said that this Judge, who was supposed to be very musical, was pressed by someone to join in the support of the Bach Choir, which gave performances in London. He declined, and when he was asked why said, "It's no use pretending. I much prefer Offenbach to Bach often." Lord Coleridge told me something that surprised me about public speaking, for which he was famous. I had confessed that I would rather do anything almost on earth than speak in public, and added that of course he couldn't understand such pusillanimity.

He said, "On the contrary, I understand very well what you feel about that."

"But," I said, "you are one of the most famous speakers in England."

"Nevertheless I always have to prepare," he said.

And he then told me that once he was invited to attend a big public dinner at which the health of the Bar was to be proposed.

"Sir Charles Russell"—he was afterwards Lord Russell—"had been selected to return thanks for the Bar and I was not to speak. As I was going to my place at the long table someone came up and told me that Sir Charles Russell had been taken ill and was unable to dine, and that I must reply for the Bar instead of him."

"This," Lord Coleridge said, "entirely spoilt my dinner. I was miserable because I had had no time to prepare my speech."

He probably made a very good one nevertheless.

My acquaintance with Lord and Lady Coleridge eventually led to my receiving the most extraordinary invitation that ever came to me. I have never understood why it was sent to me.

When the Ellicott's house-party broke up after the Festival was over, and we were all about to disperse, Lord Coleridge, when he was saying goodbye to me, added,

"Come and see us in London. We live in Sussex Square."

Lady Coleridge said, "Don't forget! Come on a Sunday."

Naturally I was delighted to accept the invitation, and I soon went to Sussex Square, was kindly received and had tea there. I repeated the visit more than once, leaving decent intervals between my calls, and then one day a thick and very large envelope arrived addressed to me.

On opening it I found a big card inside containing an invitation from Lord and Lady Coleridge to a "Breakfast" at their house on a certain day, "To meet Her Majesty's Judges," who were afterwards to proceed in state to the Albert Hall, where there was to be a big ceremony in which no less a personage than Her Majesty Queen Victoria was to take part. The so-called "Breakfast" was to take place, I think, about twelve-thirty o'clock.

Of course this card was printed, but on the top my name was written in bold letters.

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I was very much surprised at being invited to this unusual entertainment, but naturally I supposed that, as well as Her Majesty's Judges, a crowd of the Coleridges' friends would be present. Otherwise, of course, I should not have been asked.

I accepted, and when the day came I put on a frock-coat, and, adorned with a top-hat, made my way to Sussex Square.

Will it be believed that, except the host and hostess, a sister and brother of Lady Coleridge, and my humble self, there were no other guests except the Judges, who came wearing their wigs and their robes, and some of the Judges' wives. They all arrived in State carriages, in which after breakfast they were to go in solemn procession to the Albert Hall.

I felt almost overwhelmed. At breakfast I sat between two of the Judges and close to the Master of the Rolls. Legal stories, legal jokes rattled about my devoted head. Never have I felt more out of place, although everyone was very polite to me. All the time I was wondering why I had been asked. And to this day I have never found an answer to the enigma. But I was asked, and I was expected, for in front of my place there was a large card on which my name, spelt rightly for a wonder, was written.

Breakfast—it was really a banquet—over, the Judges took their departure in their State carriages and I bade Lady Coleridge, her sister and brother, farewell and wandered forth in the hot sunshine the better, or the worse, for an extraordinary experience. I need not say that I was not invited to help in the welcome to Her Most Gracious Majesty at the Albert Hall.

After the death of the Lord Chief Justice I visited Lady Coleridge at her new home in Hyde Park Gate several times. But I never dared to ask why I had been selected to meet Her Majesty's Judges, who had probably wondered as much about the matter as I did.

VIII

For a great many years I subscribed to an agency for Press Cuttings and read all that was written about my books in England. Another agency sent me all the cuttings about me from America. Fifteen or perhaps even more years ago I gave up this practice, and now I never read a review of my work unless either I happen to come across it in a paper or magazine, or receive it enclosed in a letter which some kind friend or enemy sends to me with a "You really ought to see this."

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I have had plenty of praise and blame, and don't think I have ever got any special benefit from either. I try to do the best I can. If it is liked I am pleased. If it is disliked I am not greatly cast down. Success certainly gives me a sort of impetus, and blame, followed by comparative failure, slightly depresses me. But I soon recover and set to work again with a hope of better things in the future. I have had my successes and I have had some bad failures. Perhaps the worst of the latter was connected with the theatre and happened when I was between thirty and forty, in the very crowded years of my life, and before I had my first really great popular success with a novel.

I made the acquaintance of a famous journalist, Mr. H. D. Traill, who took a kind interest in me and in what I was doing, encouraged me and now and then wrote plain words of critical warning. He was an elderly man, much older than I was, and was married but had no children. He and his wife had a large house in Bloomsbury, and gave there occasionally tremendous luncheon-parties, like banquets, at which many great guns in the literary and newspaper world assembled. There I met George Augustus Sala, Moberly Bell, Beatty Kingston, and others who were at the top of the journalistic tree, and listened, sometimes with awe, to their appallingly well-informed conversation.

One day—this was long before *Becky Sharp*—Mr. Traill said to me, "Henry Irving wants a new play for the Lyceum."

"Does he?" I said, wondering what was coming.

"Yes. And he has suggested to me to try my hand at it."

As I had never heard of Mr. Traill having written for the theatre I was rather surprised.

"I think I will," Mr. Traill added. "But I should like a collaborator. Why not you?"

Still more surprised, I said, "But I've never written for the stage!"

"No. But why not try with me? Irving wants the principal part and Miss Ellen Terry would play the heroine."

This was an exciting offer. Irving and Ellen Terry stood at the head of their profession, and the Lyceum was the most famous theatre in London bar none. I thought Irving by far the greatest English actor, and Ellen Terry the greatest actress with one exception—Mrs. Kendal, whom I shall always consider technically the best English actress I have ever seen.

Of course I accepted Mr. Traill's offer, and so I came into connection with Sir Henry Irving.

He was a strange, a very strange man. The Traills asked me to supper to meet him. Nobody else was there. We sat up till the dawn came and the milkman was preparing to make his rounds. Then Sir Henry drove me as far as Grafton Street, and I made my way home with my brain on fire.

Few men have fascinated me as much as Sir Henry Irving. He was

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absolutely unlike any man I had ever encountered. He made upon me in private life, as he did on the stage, the impression of possessing genius. He looked and seemed like a being apart. Yet I never found him at all difficult to deal with. He was invariably kind to me, polite, and presently friendly.

At supper with the Traills we discussed schemes for a play that would suit him and Miss Terry, and I suggested an Egyptian subject—not modern. It didn't occur to me that they would want a completely modern play at the Lyceum Theatre. Mr. Traill and I worked out a scheme for an Egyptian play, but Sir Henry turned it down, and said he would like a modern play with an unusual part for himself.

"I wouldn't mind playing a doctor," he said. "But he mustn't be an ordinary doctor."

After several meetings and discussions, in none of which Miss Terry took part and in which her name was but seldom mentioned, we decided what we would do, and we wrote the (unfortunate) play *The Medicine Man*, remembered now, if at all, as a failure.

I am convinced it was a very bad play. Mr. Traill and I certainly didn't go as well together in double harness as Cosmo Lennox and I did. But the strange thing was that Irving liked it, even liked it very much.

He said there must be music composed for it. I suggested my great friend, Maude Valérie White, as the composer, and he agreed at once and commissioned music from her. She was, of course, given the play to read. She told me afterwards that she never thought much of it. But naturally she didn't tell us so during rehearsals. She hoped she might be wrong in her secret judgment. In fact she was right.

Rehearsals began, and I met Ellen Terry. She hated the play. She didn't exactly say so, and was pleasant to me, but I felt that she didn't like it. She kept saying, "What is there for me to do here?" and "I don't see what I'm to make of this!" Irving didn't seem to care in the least what she thought. He seemed entirely intent upon his part as the doctor. I have never seen any other actor apparently so indifferent to the feelings and needs of his leading lady on the stage. Sometimes Miss Terry wrung her hands. He remained completely impassive.

At last the play was ready and was produced. There was an exceptionally brilliant audience, headed by the Prince and Princess of Wales. Mr. Traill and I were called to the stage at the end and applauded. But on the following day the critiques were pretty bad. And soon in the *World* Mr. William Archer gave the play what I consider to have been the *coup de grâce*.

After the first night I went only once to see the play, at a Saturday matinée, and I realized from the appearance of the theatre

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that it was a failure. Miss Dorothea Baird, Harry Irving's wife, took Ellen Terry's part. In a box opposite to mine sat Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, whom I knew well. I dared not visit them to ask what they thought of the play. I knew it was condemned.

The Medicine Man had only a very short, unremunerative run, but Sir Henry Irving showed what a fine character he had by his behaviour to me, the half author of one of his few complete failures. His manner to me never varied. It was invariably kind and friendly. And after *The Medicine Man* had been consigned to the limbo of forgetfulness he asked me to supper and came to supper with me at the Savoy Hotel restaurant.

Miss Ray Rockman, an American actress who was a good friend of mine, was also an intimate friend of the great French actress, Madame Sarah Bernhardt, whom I knew slightly, and who used to come to London during the Season to play some of her most famous parts. One summer she played in *L'Aiglon* at His Majesty's Theatre, and I met her at two or three parties with Miss Rockman. I also met her at a supper given by Sir Henry Irving behind the stage of the Lyceum Theatre.

One day when I saw Miss Rockman she said,

"I have a message for you from Madame Sarah."

"Really!" I said; and I asked what it was.

"She wants to know whether you would let her come to supper with you one night after the performance."

I was delighted, and begged Miss Rockman to ask Madame Sarah to name a date on which she could come to the Savoy Hotel restaurant, and to find out what people she would like to meet.

A message came back fixing a date and begging that Sir Henry Irving might be invited, and anyone else I knew and liked.

It was rather short notice and several people I wanted to have couldn't come. These included the Bancrofts, the Kendals, Sir Arthur Pinero and one or two more. But Irving accepted, and I succeeded in getting Miss Irene Vanbrugh, Lady Mackinnon, the Maurice Hewletts, Israel Zangwill and his wife, Cosmo Gordon-Lennox, Hugo Ames, Maude Valérie White, and a few others. Madame Sarah brought her son Maurice, and Miss Rockman. We were about twenty-two in all. The supper took place in a private room at the Savoy, and in the centre of the table there was a huge eagle fashioned in ice and surrounded by flowers.

I put Sir Henry Irving, of course, next to Madame Sarah, with Maude Valérie White, who spoke perfect French, on his other side to act as interpreter; for Irving spoke no French and Madame Sarah scarcely any English, her knowledge of our language being confined to a few detached nouns which occasionally surged up out of a torrent of French. Madame Sarah had played *L'Aiglon* twice on that day,

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but she was full of spirit and "go," stayed till very late and did not seem the least tired.

She was one of the very few people I have known who struck me as having undoubtedly genius. Others were Madame Duse, the wonderful Italian actress, Madame Sarah's rival: Madame Ristori, whom I knew only when she had retired from the stage: Monsieur Paderewski, the world-renowned pianist: and our most famous composer, Sir Edward Elgar. But Sir Edward was so very sensitive, and by nature reserved, that it was difficult to get very near to him. Sir Henry Irving I have already mentioned.

Sarah Bernhardt gave of herself freely. I had several conversations with her. One was on death, another on money. She assured me earnestly that she looked forward to death although she had no belief in an after-life. This surprised me, as she was tremendously vital, living her full life almost with fierceness; living indeed dangerously in many ways, love life, stage life, the life of vast travel, the life even of sport: a reckless being, neither *regardante* nor in any way what is called "reasonable."

She told me she longed for complete and eternal repose, and could lay down the burden of life without fear, without any regret.

About money she spoke with intensity.

"Money's meant to be spent. Spend it, spend it! Don't hoard it. I detest hoarders of money. Give with both hands and have a grand time yourself. Don't think of the future! Let the future take care of itself!"

I gently suggested that it is as well to have at least some thought for the morrow, to put something aside as a protection against the assaults of time, which inevitably bring about decadence of power if not of popularity. She would have none of it. She seemed to me to be driven almost by a fury for spending.

And so it came about that she was sold up more than once, and died leaving, I believe, nothing but the contents of her extraordinary house in Paris and debts. Whether her theatre was unencumbered I don't know, but I should have difficulty in believing it.

Madame Melba told me that when Madame Sarah was dead she looked like "a shrivelled-up squirrel."

The last time I spoke with Madame Sarah was behind the stage of a London theatre in which she had just been acting. She was in terrible pain from her leg, which afterwards had to be amputated. Her French doctor was with her, and she was being wrapped in hot cloths. I said to her, "Madame Sarah, you ought to be resting. How can you act in such pain?"

"I shall act till I die," she said. "It's my life. I should like to die in the theatre."

Her son Maurice, whom she worshipped and spoilt, was a very

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good-looking young man when I saw him, with an aristocratic air and a great deal of charm, even of fascination. He was the illegitimate son of a prince. His chief fault seems to have been extravagance. His wonderful mother ministered to every one of his whims. But he loved her deeply, and fought for her more than once.

I had two meetings with Irving when I was quite alone with him. The first was before the production of *The Medicine Man*, when one morning I had to call on him at the theatre to consult him about a passage of dialogue. I found him in his private room sitting alone by a table with his head resting on his hand. After he had greeted me he looked at me rather searchingly and said, "Have you heard the news?"

"What news?" I asked. "Has anything extraordinary happened?"

"Extraordinary—no, perhaps not quite that. But unfortunate for me."

"What is it?"

"The place where all the scenery for most of my great productions was stored has been completely burnt out."

"How dreadful!" I said, horrified. For I had seen all the Lyceum productions and knew how marvellous they were.

"Of course they were insured?" I ventured.

"Unfortunately, I find they were not," Irving said, as if till that morning he had supposed that they were. "A pity—isn't it?"

And then he began to discuss the passage of dialogue about which I had come to him, and he said not another word about the disaster which had fallen upon him.

He was a man of amazing self-control, of amazing will-power.

The other meeting I had with him took place behind the scenes of his theatre when he was acting the part of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. I had to see him one night—I forget why—and I visited him in his room during an interval when he was not on the stage. He was, of course, dressed and made up as the Jew, and was practically unrecognizable as Sir Henry Irving. For some reason we got on to the subject of drunkenness, and he said he had studied drunkards and could imitate all the different types; the sad, the merry, the angry, the gloomy, the hilarious and the ferocious.

"I'll show you!" he said.

And he gave me a brief and most extraordinary illustration in expression and action of four or five kinds of drunkards. The last, the ferocious drunkard, was absolutely horrible, and made me remember certain wonderful moments of his performance in the final act of *The Lyons Mail*. Just as he finished it he was called for the stage, and immediately he turned into the Jew and was sunk in his part.

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Sir Squire Bancroft was extremely fond of going to funerals, and Sir Arthur Pinero illustrated this fondness very amusingly in one of his plays, which began with some of the chief characters returning home from a funeral dressed in elaborate mourning, well satisfied with what they had just taken part in. I was there on the first night, and many of us were immensely amused to see Sir Squire Bancroft, in a stall close to the stage, gazing through his monocle at an actor in black gloves made up to look very like himself. He seemed totally unaware that what was going on behind the footlights had anything to do with him. I don't know whether he and his old friend "Pin" ever discussed the matter. But the next day half theatrical London was talking about it.

I had not Sir Squire's passion for funerals. Nor am I fond of weddings. And during the many years that I spent in London, followed by frequent visits there in the summer months when the Season was on, I only attended one funeral and three weddings. The funeral was Sir Henry Irving's in Westminster Abbey. Of the weddings, one was in the Savoy Chapel, at which I was best man. The second was the wedding of Sir Herbert Tree's daughter, Viola, in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. The third was Lady Marjorie Manners's wedding to the Marquis of Anglesey in St. Peter's, Eaton Square.

I had known Viola Tree since she was a very clever and very young girl, of whom her famous father was tremendously proud and fond. Lady Marjorie Manners I did not know very well, but when I was lunching one day in her company, with Miss Radclyffe Hall, at the flat of my friend, Mrs. George Batten, she said, "You must come to my wedding!" and sent me a card for it. And of course I was glad to go.

At both Viola Tree's wedding to Alan Parsons and Lady Marjorie's to Lord Anglesey there were tremendous crowds. I went to the Tree wedding with Lady Northcliffe and Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Colefax. We were a little late and could not get seats. But we got into the church and stood in a squash in a corner. Lady Northcliffe was wearing a very smart hat, in which a feather stood up, not straight but diagonally. While we were getting more and more wedged in there was a murmur that the bride and her father were coming, everyone made a movement to see better, and the feather in Lady Northcliffe's hat somehow penetrated into my—evidently open—mouth and tickled my throat below the uvula. The result was untoward. I burst into a furious fit of coughing just as the wedding procession swept up the aisle. Tears streamed from my eyes as, disentangling the feather from my throat, I stammered my apologies to Lady Northcliffe.

Lady Marjorie Manners was the most coolly self-possessed bride I have ever seen. I sat at the end of a pew close to which she passed as she walked towards the altar, immediately behind Mr. and Mrs.

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George Lambton. Lady Diana, her sister, walked close behind her with the other bridesmaids, and as Lady Marjorie passed me she turned her head towards her and said in a very audible and even imperative voice,

"Diana! Where are the red boys? *Where* are the red boys?"

The red boys were evidently to be a part of the decorative portion of the service at the altar. I hope they materialized, but I cannot remember discerning their effulgence during the ceremony that followed. Afterwards I went to the reception at the Rutland town house in Arlington Street, where, with Mrs. Jack Leslie, I congratulated the bridal couple as they stood together looking radiant. I wanted to ask the bride whether her mind was now at rest about the red boys, but the onrush of her friends and admirers prevented me.

The funeral of Sir Henry Irving was very impressive, and after it was over I was told that Ellen Terry, who of course was at it, said tearfully to a friend, "How Henry would have loved it!" Lady Irving, Harry and Laurence Irving walked immediately behind the coffin, which was entirely covered by a pall of laurel leaves. This pall was, I think, sent by a woman whom I knew, and who loved Irving deeply. She was an extremely clever woman with whom my journalistic work had brought me into contact, for we were on the staff of the same paper for a considerable time. Sir Henry found this out, and one day when I was with him, to my great surprise, began to ask me questions about her.

He said, in his curiously abrupt way, "Ha! I understand that you know Mrs. So-and-so!" (mentioning her name).

I said, "Yes, I do."

'What do you think of her?"

I said I thought she was very clever.

"That all?"

As I had no idea whether he liked her or not, whether he was intimate with her or not, I felt rather embarrassed, especially as he kept his eyes fixed upon me while he spoke.

"She's a very agreeable woman," I said. "We work on the same paper."

"I know that. She told me she knew you. She's got a nice character, eh?"

"I imagine so. She's always very pleasant to me. But I only know her slightly."

After a rather long pause he said, "You think well of her, then?"

"Certainly I do."

"H'm!"

Another pause. Then he said, "So do I!"

He then dropped the subject and he never spoke to me about her again.

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I saw her several times in the stage box of the Lyceum when he was acting. I saw her, too, at the funeral, poor lady, in tears. I have reason to believe that in Irving's rather troubled latter years her friendship and devotion were a great consolation to him. And in spite of the fact that he was nearly always surrounded, and knew everybody who was anybody in London, and was universally acknowledged to be the head of his profession, I think he was a rather lonely man. I had not only a great respect for him—I felt really attached to him. And though I have seen many fine actors, both in England and on the Continent, in certain moments he was by far the greatest actor I have ever seen. I agree with all that Ellen Terry's son, Gordon Craig, has written about him. In his acting Irving had moments of absolute genius. One of these occurred in Conan Doyle's play *A Story of Waterloo*, when Irving, as the very old, almost dying corporal, stood at the window to see the Guards march past and saluted.

I was in the stalls on the first night of this play, and saw tears on many faces as the lonely old man watched those who had once been his comrades go by, and stood at the salute with the sunlight falling upon him.

Another very great actor I have seen was Coquelin *Ainé*.

A third wonderful actor was Zacconi, the Italian. Of course, by far the greatest actor on the operatic stage was Chaliapine. The only trouble with him was that he acted and sang everyone else off the stage. His genius was cruel. But what a genius he was!

One winter in Paris I had an apartment in the Hôtel Plaza Athénée, almost next door to the Théâtre des Champs Elysées. A very superior Frenchman waited on me in my sitting-room, where I took my meals as I was not very well. One day he said to me in French, "There's a very great man often comes next door to you, monsieur."

"Really! Who is it?" I asked.

"Monsieur Chaliapine, the famous Russian opera-singer. He has friends in the apartment just beyond yours. And can't he drink, monsieur! He often comes to *déjeuner* and I wait on him. Two or three bottles are nothing to him. But he can stand them. He can stand anything. A wonderful man!"

I couldn't help wishing I knew Chaliapine's friends. I would have stood a good deal to make his acquaintance.

Although, of course, I got to know Miss Ellen Terry during the rehearsals of *The Medicine Man*, and she was never at all disagreeable to me, Irving's curious indifference about her part, and his belief in a play which she rightly thought could not succeed at the Lyceum Theatre, made our relations rather awkward. Long afterwards, however, we became good friends, and when I had a country place on the borders of Sussex, near the big cottage that belonged to her, I met her

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several times and had the pleasure of taking her out for drives in my motor-car. She had quite wonderful charm and was a sweet, though a very whimsical woman. Once when her almost equally delightful sister, Marion Terry, was staying with me in Wittersham House, Ellen Terry came over to lunch, and I was photographed in the garden standing between them. Marion Terry was one of the most kind, agreeable and sympathetic women I have ever met. As to Ellen Terry, she was irresistible.

The failure of *The Medicine Man* and the failure of my comic book, *The Prophet of Berkeley Square*, did not knock me out. I sternly resolved to do better and to take the terrible career very seriously. And I set to work on a long novel called *Felix*.

This was suggested to me in part by a rather protracted sojourn in France to improve my French, at first in the depths of the country in the house of a delightful old Frenchwoman who took paying guests, afterwards in Tours, where I had lessons from a clever French priest, whom I eventually, at his own earnest request, brought to London, with rather disastrous results.

In France I met an old tailor who had known Balzac, and who told me several things about the great author; many of whose novels I devoured at that time. This led me to write *Felix*, which fortunately improved a reputation that had suffered from *The Prophet of Berkeley Square*. But before that I made in August a trip to Algeria, and stayed for a time with the Trappist monks at Staouëli, where I took notes for a book which was just beginning to take shape in my mind, but which was not to be written till a good deal later on after my visits to Southern Algeria. I was beginning to loosen my ties with London, but I had not altogether given up living there. It was difficult to do that. There were so many interesting people to be met with there, and at that time I was extremely fond of going out in society, and when I was in London hated to spend an evening at home and alone. I was not quite what Sir Squire Bancroft told me he was, "a London sparrow," but I still liked better being in London than in almost any other place in the world that I knew. I was not unlike those innumerable French writers who think of Paris as the centre of the world. Only for Paris I put London.

Among the many people whom I knew in London were Lady Charles Beresford, met by me first in Louxor; Lady Randolph Churchill and her sister, Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Leslie; Edgar Speyer, afterwards Sir Edgar Speyer for a time and then again Mr. Speyer; Arthur Chappell of the famous "Pops" and his hospitable niece, "Minnie" Chappell, who kept house for him; Sir George Lewis and his family; Maude Valérie White, the composer, who became one

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of the best friends I ever had; Mr. and Mrs. Crackenthorpe, the parents of the gifted young writer of *Wreckage*; Mrs. Walter Palmer, afterwards Lady Palmer, the great friend of George Meredith, who called her "Queen Jean"; most of the stars of the stage, many writers and several musicians and painters.

Lady Randolph Churchill I came to know better later on when she was married to George Cornwallis-West, and afterwards before she married her third husband. I never knew, I never even saw Lord Randolph Churchill, but I knew both her second and third husbands.

She was a very good-looking woman, and good-looking in an unusual way. She had wonderful eyes and a brow that marked her out from all other women. She had also a great deal of personality. She was clever, determined and very direct. You knew where you were with her. She said, or always seemed to say, just what she meant. An accomplished musician, she was also greatly interested in literature, and at one time "ran" a big magazine for a short time. She got up a wonderful pageant once at which tilts were "run" by famous members of society. In her youth she hunted. She was a leader of fashion. She knew everybody and was adored by many. Yet she remained totally devoid of affectation. When I got to know her rather well I liked her very much. Especially I liked her after I had had—not a row, it never came to that, but a difficulty with her.

This difficulty occurred after I had given up living in London and only came there from time to time to stay and to see my friends. A play of mine had been produced at the Criterion Theatre by Miss Evelyn Millard. I was not there and never saw it, as I was in Sicily when it was given. This play was written, and I could prove it, before I had got to know a near relation of Lady Randolph's of whom she was very fond. It seems that a number of people who saw the play believed that a certain situation in it, in which a mother and son were involved, had been "lifted" by me from a somewhat analogous situation in the private life of Lady Randolph's relation, and moreover that I had given to this lady a character which was not hers and which would have been odious to her. In fact, it was thought that I had shown her as she was not, and to her detriment.

As I was far away in Sicily I knew nothing of this gossip. When I returned to London, however, I met Lady Randolph Churchill and greeted her, as usual, with cordiality. She returned my greeting rather coldly, and after a few words said, with her usual directness,

"I have a bone to pick with you."

I had no idea what this bone could be and showed my astonishment.

"Come and see me tomorrow," she said, giving me an address at her club, "and we'll have it out."

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"Of course I'll come," I said, entirely in the dark as to what was the matter.

Fortunately I felt perfectly innocent, as I knew that I had never done, or thought of doing, anything that could be offensive to Lady Randolph.

Calm in this consciousness of innocence, but full of curiosity, I went to the club on the morrow, and was shown into a sitting-room where Lady Randolph was writing a letter. She got up, touched my hand and said,

"Sit down. And now let's have it out!"

She then told me that I had done a very wrong thing.

"What thing?" I asked.

"You have made use of something confided to you in strict privacy in a play."

"What *do* you mean?" I said. "What play?"

She explained what she meant. I assured her on my honour that I had never had her relation in my mind when I wrote the play, and that I had written it even before I knew her. When I wrote it I had known nothing of the circumstances which Lady Randolph alluded to as being in some slight degree akin to those in the play. The whole thing was a mare's nest. My manner, perhaps, even more than what I stated, seemed to carry conviction to her, and when I had finished she said,

"I believe you."

"I can prove that what I have told you is true," I said. "The first draft of the play, with the situation you speak of, was written years ago for the St. James's Theatre, at the request of George Alexander, long before I knew your relation or anything about her. George Alexander refused it. I put it aside, took it out eventually and tried to improve it. But I never altered that situation and the character you thought was meant for your relative. George Alexander could bear me out in this."

I was able to prove the truth of what I said. Lady Randolph was entirely convinced. She told her relative. And we were friends till she died. After her death I had a letter from her third husband, in which he wrote that she had always considered me one of her very good friends.

Now and then we went to a theatre after dining together, and when she had a country house near St. Albans I spent a long day there alone with her and she told me some intimate details of her life. Her untimely death was a tragedy. I often wish she could have lived to know of the splendid part her son Winston has played in the defence of the country she made her own on her marriage. She was an outstanding woman as he is an outstanding man.

Lady Leslie, her sister, the mother of Shane Leslie the brilliant

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writer, and aunt of Clare Sheridan, who needs no introduction, as she is known all over the world both as writer and sculptor, is also an accomplished woman of the world, at home in every circle of society. I often met her when I was in London and dined in her company, and we met again in Sicily, where she paid a visit after a stay which she made in Malta. One day she asked me to come to tea with her on the following afternoon. I went to her house and rang the bell, which was answered by a footman, to whom I said that I had been invited to come.

As I was about to step into the hall, he said, "Excuse me, sir, but His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught is here."

I had met the Duke, but I hesitated, not knowing what I ought to do, whether to go away or, as I had been asked to come, to send in my name.

"Allow me to take up your name, sir," the footman said.

And before I could do anything he went away upstairs. He came back directly and said,

"Please come up, sir."

I obeyed and had tea with Mrs. Leslie, as I think she was then, and H.R.H., who talked to us that day a great deal about music. While I was there the youngest son of the Leslies, a mere child, came in and seemed very much at home with the Royal visitor.

The Duke had remarkable, very steady eyes, and the child went up to him, put a hand on his knee and said, "What wicked eyes you have!"

The Duke laughed and said, "More compliments? We get plenty of flattery, but now for home truths!"

The child then added, "But I like them."

"That makes it all right," said the Duke.

Once I was standing with Lady Leslie at a ball given by the Duke and Duchess of Westminster at which the Connaughts were present. They were forming up to dance the Royal quadrille which was to open the ball. And Lady Leslie said, "Let us see how they acquit themselves in it."

Just then the Duchess of Connaught happened to look at her, and spoke to either the Duke or the Duchess of Westminster. Someone, I think an equerry, then came up to Lady Leslie and said,

"Please come, Lady Leslie. You are wanted for the quadrille."

For a moment she looked rather startled. Then she murmured, "Now you can see how *I* acquit myself!"

I did. She danced admirably.

Clare Sheridan I met first when she was Clare Moreton Frewen, the daughter of the third of the Jerome sisters. The Duchess of Sutherland gave a series of very interesting evening parties at Stafford House, where beauties, aristocrats, politicians, soldiers, painters,

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writers, distinguished lawyers, doctors and members of the various professions mingled together informally and had a good time under the auspices of one of the most beautiful and intelligent women in London, and there I made friends with Miss Moreton Frewen, who had, I think, just come out. She was a very pretty and an exceedingly natural and sincere girl, and I took a great liking to her which has lasted till now. At that time she seemed rather diffident, though not shy, and gave little promise of the tremendous independence which she showed later on, when she carved busts of Bolsheviks, wandered the world over, was a startlingly successful journalist, and made a sensation with her book, *Nuda Veritas*. She told me that she would never marry —never. And she married Wilfred Sheridan, one of the handsomest men in England, and had a son and a daughter, both of whom I have known. She went about a great deal, yet she seemed to me quite unworldly. There was something very earnest about her which appealed to me very much. She was unlike other girls. Now and then I felt she was fated to do something definite, perhaps unusual, in the world. But I did not know what. At that time she had no idea that she had a marked talent for sculpture, and she was collecting plants from her friends for a garden of remembrance at Brede Place in Sussex.

She was very anxious to meet E. F. Benson. And I asked her mother and her to meet him in a flat I had at one time in Queen Anne's Mansions, Westminster. He came and seemed to like her as much as I did. When the Season was over we kept up a correspondence which lasted for a long while. The last time I saw her was in her garden at Biskra on the edge of the desert, before she had built her house there, and in the evening at the little house she had rented in the village, where I dined in the company of her, her daughter and my friend, John Knittel, with whom I was travelling. Since then she has lost Dick, her only son, whom I knew as a schoolboy in Territet, Switzerland. He and his cousin, Roger Frewen, now attached to our Legation at Berne, came down from their school to have tea with me. Dick was then a mere boy, but full of beaming life, intelligence and a youthful eagerness for experience that was touching.

Alas, he died, when still young, at Constantine, that barbaric city which I know so well in Algeria, and Clare Sheridan was left bereaved to take up her life without the boy she adored.

Fortunately she is a woman of great courage and has a conviction which I am totally unable to share. She believes that we on earth can have intercourse with those who have passed on into another sphere of being.

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IX

LADY CHARLES BERESFORD was a very prominent and a rather extraordinary figure in the social England of those days, both in London and afterwards when she had a large house on Ham Common, near the Sudeleys' house where I once met Rhoda Broughton, whom I found rather acid. She was very vivacious in an unfinished way, a tremendous but scatterbrained talker and piano-player, astonishing always in appearance and sometimes in dress, clever, slipshod, haphazard, good-natured, all over the place. E. F. Benson drew her in more than one of his books. She rushed about in society and entertained largely in her houses. Once I went down to a luncheon she gave at Ham and we were waited upon by, I think, five men-servants. It was there that I met for the first time Sir Frederick Milner, a noble Englishman, who proved his worth especially after the war of 1914-1918. He was terribly deaf already, but could hear, though not general conversation. In his later years he gave his whole life to the service of the wounded soldiers, and almost destroyed his health by his perpetual exertions to help them and establish them in comfortable conditions. He was a quiet selfless hero and his death left hundreds grieving.

In Egypt I played the piano to Lady Charles. In London and at Ham she played two or three times to me. Her playing showed her character. She attacked difficult music with intrepid bravado, and scrambled through it making quantities of mistakes and sometimes skipping entirely the most complicated passages. Very often she didn't finish a piece, but half or three-quarters of the way through it she would say, "That's enough of that! Let's have something else!" One couldn't call her musical. But she had a sort of feverish inclination towards music. Her playing of Chopin was a nightmare. Yet he seemed to be her favourite composer.

The last time I dined with her was in London. A large party assembled, but no hostess was in the drawing-room to receive it. Nor was there a host—for I think Lord Charles was at sea. We waited for a good many minutes. Then at last Lady Charles rushed in and began shaking hands. In moving from one guest to another she came in front of a mirror, looked into it and exclaimed,

"Good heavens! I've forgotten my left eyebrow! Why didn't you *tell* me?"

And she rushed away to her bedroom to fetch the missing adornment.

She and Lord Charles seemed to get on very well together. He was full of humour and, I think, regarded her as an entertaining spectacle. She was as unlike the sort of woman one might expect an admiral

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to be married to as Mrs. Ellicott was unlike the sort of woman one would naturally look for in the chosen wife of a highly intellectual, but totally unmusical, bishop. Yet both these apparently ill-assorted couples ran amiably together in double harness. I often wondered what they talked about when they were together and no others were with them. What a mystery marriage often is to the looker-on!

During my years in London I came to know the remarkable Harmsworth family who made such a resounding noise in the world and obtained such vast influence over the English nation. Of the Harmsworths I knew Lord Northcliffe as Mr. Alfred Harmsworth, as Sir Alfred Harmsworth, and as Viscount Northcliffe. Lord Rothermere, when I first met him at the Alfred Harmsworths' fine house in Berkeley Square, was Mr. Harold Harmsworth, and at that time was less known to the public than his remarkable brother. I forget how I came to know the Harmsworths. I suppose I met them at first casually in society. But Alfred, though without a title, was already very well known and had a great deal of influence. And he was evidently already a rich man.

He seemed to me entirely devoted to his work. His wife, afterwards Lady Northcliffe and eventually Lady Hudson, was a very pretty, intelligent, kind-hearted, energetic woman with infinite charm. She helped her husband socially and, I should think, in every possible way. She often asked me to dinner in Berkeley Square before a theatre-party or a visit to her box at the opera, and on all these occasions her husband was supposed to be going with us. And on not one occasion did he go. When the moment came to put on cloaks and coats and go out to the motor he would say, "I don't think I'll come. No! I must go and put the paper to bed"; or "You'll be all right without me and I've got work to do."

He never came with us, though now and then his wife tried to persuade him.

He was almost strangely boyish-looking and yet had an extremely strong personality, absolute self-possession and a will of iron. To me he was invariably kind, and he did me some "good turns," but many said he could be cruel. I never detected cruelty in him, but I noticed that some people were very much afraid of him.

I did no work for him, and never asked him for any favour. He noticed this, and one day, when I was with him alone at his house near Broadstairs, he said to me, "You are almost the only man I know who has never asked me to do something for him."

I felt rather embarrassed and said, "Why should I ask you for anything?"

He said, "I don't know. But I wish you would. Now remember this! If you ever do want something that I could do, let me know."

I thanked him and said I would.

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Long afterwards I asked two things of him. One was to give publicity to a great matinée that Princess Marie Louise and I were getting up during the war of 1914-1918 for the wounded soldiers, at His Majesty's Theatre; the other was to have the first book of a great friend of mine reviewed in one of his papers. He immediately had a splendid "puff" for the matinée put into the *Daily Mail*, and he personally wrote a review of my friend's book for the Literary Supplement of *The Times* newspaper, of which at that time he was the owner.

Lord Northcliffe could be a good friend and he was a man of his word, but he was not a man one could easily become intimate with, and though I met him a good many times I never felt intimate with him. Lord Rothermere I knew but slightly. He too had a remarkably strong personality. And when his famous brother was dead he became much more publicly prominent. Before then, though he too had made his way and proved his financial genius, and indeed had had great success, Lord Northcliffe, I thought, overshadowed him.

Lady Northcliffe I was very fond of. I knew her second husband, a clever man, totally unlike Lord Northcliffe, and was deeply grieved by his death. He was taken dangerously ill in Egypt just after I had been with them both at Assouan on the Nile. She managed to bring him down to Louxor, where I was living at that time, and I shared her anxiety about his condition. At last he got better and I hoped had made a complete recovery. They were eventually able to travel to England, where they lived at Hill Hall, Epping, which had formerly belonged to George Moore's great friend, Mrs. Charles Hunter. But Sir Robert did not live for very long. I think he was one of the best of men. He had worked very hard for the hospitals.

Alfred Spender, the editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, and Lord Northcliffe knew each other very well, and were good friends though so utterly different from each other in every way. Mr. Spender cared very much for the good—one might say the moral good—of the British Public. Lord Northcliffe cared for the good of his newspapers.

Mr. Spender told me that once Lord Northcliffe in the *Daily Mail* was conducting a campaign which he considered was doing a very great deal of harm to the public. And he went to Lord Northcliffe's great newspaper building and had an interview with him. During it he pointed out with his invariable lucidity and fair-mindedness why he objected so strongly to this campaign, and he begged Lord Northcliffe to put a stop to it. Lord Northcliffe listened attentively to all he had to say. When he had finished, Lord Northcliffe touched a bell and gave an order. The order was that the circulation sheets of the *Daily Mail*, from before the beginning of the campaign to that moment, should be brought to him. They were brought, and Lord Northcliffe showed them to Alfred Spender. The sheets proved that ever since

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the beginning of the campaign Spender considered so harmful to public opinion the circulation of the paper had been steadily rising.

"You see!" Lord Northcliffe said.

Spender said, "Yes! Well?"

Lord Northcliffe simply moved his broad shoulders, as much as to say, "How can you possibly expect me to stop a campaign that is doing so much good to the paper?"

And the interview came to an end.

The Northcliffes entertained a good deal, but she told me he hardly ever accepted an invitation to any ordinary dinner-party, and though I often met Lady Northcliffe out I only remember meeting him on one occasion. And this was quite unexpected. I was asked to a dinner given by Mr. and Mrs. Colefax—afterwards Sir Arthur and Lady Colefax—in their house in Onslow Square. I knew that Lady Northcliffe and Lady Malcolm—Mrs. Langtry's daughter—and others were to be there, but nobody—including, I believe, the hostess—expected to see Lord Northcliffe. Suddenly, however, he took it into his head to come, and arrived with his wife, to the amazement, but also to the pleasure of the company. That was the only occasion on which I ever met him at dinner outside his own house. Nor did I ever see him at the opera or at a theatre. Work fascinated him. Work was his life. But of course he knew everyone worth knowing. I think he thoroughly relished his life. It came to an end in a way that was not without tragedy. And now his brother, Lord Rothermere, has passed away too, and has not lived to see what a terribly true prophet he was. When the politicians were stricken with blindness he saw. He saw and uttered warning upon warning. But he spoke to deaf ears. And he died far away from his country and knew not the end.

A true friend of mine, both before and after his marriage to the admirable violinist, now known in America as a poetess, who became Lady Speyer, was Edgar Speyer the banker, who represented Speyer Brothers in England, took English nationality, became a Privy Councillor and a baronet, was the chief supporter of all the music at Queen's Hall, and eventually, owing to the war, was stripped of his English honours, became once more Mr., or Herr Speyer, and vanished from England into the welcoming arms of America, where Mrs. Speyer still lives.

I was introduced to Edgar Speyer by Mr. Arthur Chappell and Miss Minnie Chappell, and we became intimate. He took a kind interest in my affairs and, in my turn, I took a great interest in all he was doing to prepare and make beautiful the great house which is now the American Women's Club in Grosvenor Street. Day after day I went there when I had a spare moment, to inspect the improvements, and finally I witnessed the installation of the marvellous staircases—there

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were two—which I believe were bought in Germany and brought over to England. I was also taken to the exquisite library separated from the main building by a delicious formal garden. And I was the first guest to be entertained there at an outdoor dinner, at which Mr. Speyer was the host and I was the only guest.

After Sir Edgar's marriage he and his wife entertained all London lavishly, and their dinners were followed by lovely music in the great room upstairs that was dedicated to the art they both loved. Lady Speyer was a really fine and thoroughly accomplished violinist, and after she departed in sad circumstances from London, giving up all her friends, even the most intimate ones, she wrote and published a poem called "Fiddler's Farewell" which became widely known in America. When scandalous rumours began to get about, accusing Sir Edgar of being violently anti-British and secretly leagued with our enemies, he and his wife were in the country—I think at Overstrand, where they had a house. Presently, however, they returned to their house in London, where it seemed that they shut themselves up for a time and lived in retirement, either ignoring, or ignored by, their innumerable acquaintances.

As soon as I knew they were there I went to leave my cards on them. Almost immediately I received a note inviting me to dine, and stating that I should meet no one, as they had given up entertaining. I accepted, of course, and went. And I was the only guest from outside. I met only one lady who was staying in the house, not an Englishwoman.

That was to me a sad meal, in spite of the great cordiality with which I was welcomed. After dinner Sir Edgar and I were left alone and we had a long and intimate talk.

I began by telling him that I did not believe all the rumours that were making his position in England almost impossible. He spoke very frankly. He told me that of course he was not an enemy of England and the English. "But," he said, "I was born a German. That I can't help. Is it a sin?"

He added that he loved England, but though he hated war he could not pretend that he hated all Germans and everything German.

"How could I?" he said. "How could it be expected of me?"

He asserted that he was doing absolutely nothing political, that the rumours about him were totally false. I believed him. He seemed to be painfully affected by the lies told about him. Lady Speyer was also, I know, quite outraged by much that was said, and she took a line that upset one of her most intimate woman friends, whom I knew and had often been with in her house. Meeting this friend she cut her dead, though the friend had no intention of not greeting her as warmly as she had always done in the past.

"I never dreamed of cutting her," she said to me. "But she ignored

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me and would have nothing more to do with me. So ended a great friendship."

I never had a chance of getting at the rights of what happened afterwards. Sir Edgar lost his Baronetcy and his Privy Councillorship and the Speyers vanished from London. Years after he was dead, I met Mrs. Speyer at St. Moritz, and we renewed our friendship, saw each other several times, had some long talks over "old days," and she gave me a signed copy of a book of her poems. She has, or had, a pretty house in Baden-Baden, but she told me she lived mainly in New York in Grammercy Park.

I had a long experience of Sir Edgar Speyer. He was a man with a very kind heart and a very thoughtful mind. He helped a great many people, some of whom I knew personally. An ardent lover of music, like so many Jews and so many Germans, he was lavishly generous for the cause of music in London. And yet so keen and fierce were the passions roused by the war that a man in authority in London told me that if the Speyers had not quitted London when they did their lives might have been in danger.

I have only one slightly unpleasant memory in connection with my friendship with them, and it was not brought about by any fault of theirs.

While I was in London the Speyers gave a very great dinner, it might have been called a banquet, in their house and I was invited to it. I think it was in honour of the newly appointed German Ambassador to England, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein. At any rate, he was at it, with other diplomats, members of the Cabinet, social lights, beauties, musicians, authors and famed conversationalists. For there were others, besides Oscar Wilde, Mr. Whistler and Frank Harris, who became famous in London because of their talk. The chief of these was perhaps Mr. Henry Cust, whom I knew. I think he was at this banquet. We first had a marvellous dinner, of many courses, on the menu of which were ortolans. Afterwards there was a programme of music in the beautiful music-room.

In one way, not in all ways, I was lucky that evening, for I sat next to Lady Algernon Gordon-Lennox, who, among women, was perhaps the most agreeable conversationalist I ever met in London. I thoroughly enjoyed my evening, and at dinner I ate ortolans.

All went well, almost more than well, as long as I was in the house. but very soon after I got home I was seized with an internal pain which rapidly increased in violence until I could bear it no longer. And at about two a.m. I got up, dressed and went out to find, if possible, a chemist's shop that was kept open all night. After searching for a long time in great and growing agony I found one in the Haymarket, explained my condition and begged for a remedy. I knew I must have been poisoned and said so. The chemist treated me. I

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forget how. But he gave me also a strong sleeping draught. I went home, got again into bed and fell asleep.

The next day I was still in pain and felt weak and horribly ill. But I managed to dress, telegraphed to my Sicilian chauffeur to meet me at the Whitstable on Sea station, not far from my cottage at Tankerton, and took an express train down, giving up all my engagements.

Gradually I recovered. But recovery took several days, during which I ate scarcely anything and kept perfectly quiet. And during most of the time my mind was occupied in wondering how many people at that wonderful dinner had been attacked as I had been.

Eventually I wrote to Lady Speyer, told her what had happened to me, and inquired whether anyone else had been ill after dining at her house. I learned from her that she, too, had been a victim, and that on the following day, though engaged to play the violin, as a friend not as a professional, to Queen Alexandra, she had been unable to go. A few, but only a few, others had been ill. She and I put it down to the ortolans. The dinner had been so long and so varied that not many had eaten of them. I was one of those who were greedy. Lady Speyer, too, had succumbed to their attraction. Punishment had fallen upon us and just a few others.

During my long life I have suffered from poison four times.

My candid friend, John Knittel, the much-read Swiss author, considers me "as tough as an old mule." This doesn't sound very attractive, but there may be some truth in it. Certainly I have managed to live to what is often called a "ripe" old age, and still often feel preposterously young.

Lord and Lady Ripon gave wonderful dinners in their beautiful house at Coombe, and these were followed by music or some other entertainment. At one of them I sat next to Madame Karsavina, the great Russian dancer, who was performing in Monsieur Diaghileff's glorious ballets at Covent Garden. On the other side of me there was a lady, and beyond her there was a small, curious-looking young man dressed in "smoking." I did not know who he was, or what he was, but I could see by his eyes and eyebrows that he was entirely non-English.

When dinner was over all the women left the tables, and I was next to this young man. I looked at him and he looked at me. I smiled politely and so did he. Then, as he did not speak, I said something to him. He murmured a reply that I could not understand. I then had another try, in French. Again he muttered something vague, and again I could not catch any words that I knew.

At this moment Monsieur Henry Bernstein, whom I knew pretty well, came up to me, greeted me and said, "Surely you know each other?"

I shook my head.

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"Let me introduce you, then. Mr. Robert Hichens—Monsieur Nijinsky."

That was my first—and last—personal meeting with the greatest male dancer of the age, and probably of any age. Almost directly after the introduction we all joined the ladies, and then, on a specially built stage in a room fitted up as a sort of theatre, Karsavina and Nijinsky danced for our delight the lovely "Spectre de la Rose."

Lady Ripon was a great friend of Nijinsky's, and one day she showed me a large photograph of him in a silver frame. At the bottom of the photograph in bold letters were these words, "A celle qui aime mes danses plus que mes idées," and Nijinsky's name.

I asked her whether he spoke French, and she said, "Yes, a little."

He had not seemed to know much when I sat beside him.

Henry Bernstein, one of the most famous of modern French playwrights, said he would like to give me a signed copy of one of his works. I was delighted and thanked him.

"Which shall it be?" he said.

I asked him to give me the play of his that he liked the best. He said, "It's not the most popular one, but I'll give it to you."

And he gave me *Israel*, with a few words written on it and addressed to me. I thought, and still think, *Israel* an amazingly poignant play. It deals with the Jewish question in a fiercely dramatic way. The young man round whom the action centres is the son of a French Duchess, one of the old aristocracy. The Duke, her husband, is dead. The son is a violent anti-Semite and tries to get a Jewish millionaire who is a member, with him, of one of the most exclusive clubs in Paris turned out of it merely because he is a Jew. He does not know that not only has the Jew been his mother's lover, but that he himself is the son of the Jew and not of the Duke whom he had always supposed to be his father. He finds this out in the second act of the play, in a great and terrible interview with his mother, who has heard of the scene at the club in which he has publicly insulted his own father, and confesses everything for fear lest there should be a duel between father and son. In the third and last act there is a remarkably subtle scene between the Jew and the fiery young man, in which the Jew practically proves to his son that most of his conduct has been caused not by the Christian in him—derived from his mother—but by the Jew in him derived from his father. The play ends with the son's suicide.

I have never had a chance of seeing this play acted, though I think I have seen most of Monsieur Bernstein's successes, either in London acted in English or in Paris acted in French. But in the reading of it I was greatly struck by its power and its remarkable subtlety. One of his best-known works, *Le Voleur*, called in London *The Thief*, I saw in both Paris and London. Lucien Guitry, the father of Sacha

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Guitry, was marvellous in the Paris production. In London Sir George Alexander and Miss Irene Vanbrugh acted brilliantly as the husband and wife.

I had a good deal to do later on with Sir George Alexander, who produced a play by J. B. Fagan called *Bella Donna*, which was an adaptation for the stage of my novel of the same name, and contained a great deal of the dialogue taken out of the book. Mrs. Patrick Campbell was Bella Donna, and we had a fine time with her at the rehearsals, but when I met Nijinsky, and during my short intimacy with Henry Bernstein, I scarcely knew her, and when she came across me either she ignored me or, if that was impossible, declared that I always cut her.

When we became friends I taxed her with this, and she said, "In those days you always seemed to me so indefinite that I could never remember whether I knew you or didn't know you."

"But when you declared that *I* cut *you*?"

"That was to please your vanity. I was pretending that *you* could never remember *me*."

"A stark impossibility! Whatever you may be, *you* are not indefinite."

"Now you are talking to me just like Bernard Shaw talks."

Mr. Shaw was a great friend of Mrs. Campbell. She had to undergo an operation once and I visited her when she was in bed in a nursing-home. When I came in she told me that Mr. Bernard Shaw had just left her.

"We have been playing Fox and Geese," she said. "And I beat him. Let's have another game now."

The board was lying on the bedcover and we played. I forget which of us won, but I'm almost certain it must have been Mrs. Campbell.

X

DURING the years which came immediately after my success with *The Green Carnation* I worked very hard. Usually I sat up till very late, but I was up early and spent the whole of the morning at my writing-table unless I had to go to a newspaper office. Besides being on the staff of the London *World* for some considerable time I was on the staff of a paper called *Hearth and Home*, and I wrote, under the name of "Crotchet," a weekly article called "Crotchets and Quavers" for *The Gentlewoman*. I also contributed from time to time to two or

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three other papers, and published a poem called "A Lesson in Love." This was recited many times by the well-known actor, Hermann Vezin. On many afternoons I went to concerts, generally given by the famous pianists. And my evenings were often spent at the opera, at concerts, and at first nights of new plays. Between 1894 and 1905 I published ten books. So I was busy. Nevertheless, now and then I took a holiday. Twice I travelled with my friend Reginald Temple. We camped out in Morocco when Morocco was still so wild that we were obliged to have a guard of native soldiers round our tents every night to keep away robbers. I wrote a long Moroccan story, called "The Charmer of Snakes," which I issued first in a magazine and then included in a volume of stories. This was translated into French and published in one of the chief magazines of Paris. Temple and I also went earlier to the West Indies and spent some time in Jamaica, going up into the hills and riding a great deal in the wonderful forests. Twice we visited Barbadoes, and we touched at Hayti, where a negro revolution was taking place which prevented us from going ashore. Later on, just after the marriage of my younger sister, with a Swedish friend and Mr. Arthur Humphreys of Hatchard's in Piccadilly, I visited Sweden in the depth of the winter, and spent several weeks in Stockholm, tobogganing on ice-hills during the day and skating in the frozen harbour at night by the glare of torches.

I was particularly fond of going to first nights, and seldom missed one unless it clashed with an opera performance or a concert. I was at the first night of all Oscar Wilde's plays and of the plays of Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones, both of whom I knew personally. I saw, at the first London performance of *Charley's Aunt*, the usually serious William Archer convulsed with laughter at Penley dressed up as an old woman smoking a huge cigar. And I witnessed Mrs. Patrick Campbell's first triumph in the part of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*.

The failure of my comic book, *The Prophet of Berkeley Square*, decided me not to attempt again to be farcical, as I had been with success in *The Londoners*, and I set to work seriously to try to improve my reputation. The first result of my efforts was a long novel called *Felix*, over which I took immense pains. I wrote it after much study of Balzac, and a visit to Touraine in the summer to improve my French, a visit which was broken in the heat of August by a sudden dash across the Mediterranean to Algiers, where I arrived in the midst of the riots against the Jews led by Max Régis, for whom I was taken two or three times by the natives with rather embarrassing results. Apparently the Jew-baiter and I resembled each other, and when I arrived at my hotel wearing what used to be called a "Homburg Hat," bought at Heath's in London, the housemaid greeted me with the remark, "Ah, monsieur, vous portez le chapeau anti-juif!"

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After two or three weeks in, and near, Algiers I went to stay in the Trappist Monastery of Stouëli, and there conceived the first vague idea of *The Garden of Allah*.

For *Felix* I had very good reviews. One which specially pleased me appeared in the *Spectator*, and was written, I believe, by Mrs. W. K. Clifford the authoress and playwright, whose *Aunt Anne* was such an outstanding success. I came to know her intimately. She was a very interesting and gifted woman, and her daughter, who became Lady Dilke, had a genuine poetic talent.

I was reading this morning, before going on with this autobiography, Monsieur André Gide's *Journal*, a book which I always have with me, and very often dip into. I have read every word of it more than once, but I return to it again and again, and always find something of value which wakes up my mind, or my heart.

This morning I happened upon a passage in which Monsieur Gide writes of his association with Monsieur Roger Martin Du Gard, whom he often consulted about what he was writing, and who, in return, often consulted him. He states that he considers this seeking of a friend's counsel, and giving counsel to him, an excellent habit.

"Bennett," he writes (meaning Arnold Bennett), "Bennett s'étonne que nous cherchions ainsi le conseil l'un de l'autre; rien de plus profitable pourtant."

No doubt he is right if you have a Roger Martin Du Gard to advise you, or to receive advice from you. But I have never been able to consult other writers about what I am doing. I work in solitude and have to trust to myself alone. In fact, I distrust the literary advice of friends.

There used to be a man at King Edward the Seventh's Court, much valued by the King and Queen, who received the nickname of "Better Not," because whenever he was consulted about something he said,

"Better not do it, Your Majesty!"

I knew this man, who was caution personified, and have met many like unto him, and I was afraid that if I consulted one of my literary friends I should be told not to do what I meditated doing. But I did once tell Reginald Turner, whom I had known ever since Egypt, of a scheme which had taken possession of my mind even before I wrote *Felix*, but had not felt quite ready to carry out.

When I stayed with the Trappist monks in Algeria I had the permission from the Révérend Père who was the head of the monastery to speak to two of the monks. One was the monk who presided over the *hôtellerie* in which I had a room and in which I had all my meals, the other was the very aged monk who had charge of the cemetery where the dead Trappists were buried. I might only talk with the latter when I was in the cemetery.

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He was extremely old, about eighty, and had been an African soldier until he was forty.

One day when we were talking together I asked him how he could have made up his mind to become a Trappist after having been for so long a soldier.

He said, "I had had enough of the world. I longed for a complete change of life. My life had been wild, very wild. I had seen fighting. I had taken part in orgies. I desired peace and seclusion."

I asked him if during his forty years or so as a Trappist he had never longed to break out of the monastery, to cancel his vows, to return to the world.

"Never!" he said. "I am happy here."

I then asked him whether he had ever known of a monk who had found the life of silence, labour in the fields, and prayer, intolerable.

"Yes—one," he said.

"And what did he do?"

"One night he disappeared."

"And—then?"

"We never knew what became of him. We never saw him again or heard anything about him."

This conversation gave me the idea of the book which eventually I wrote and called *The Garden of Allah*. I tried to imagine what this erring monk might have done after his escape from the monastery, where, perhaps, he went, how he faced a world that he had never yet known—for he had not been a soldier but had joined the order as a novice when very young—whether he had experienced the love of women, whether he had ever been tormented because of the solemn vow he had broken. And eventually, after two or three visits to Biskra and to Touggourt in the "belly" of the Sahara desert, I decided on the scheme of the book.

One day in conversation with Reginald Turner I told him that I thought of writing it. He tried to dissuade me. He said that no one wanted to read about the desert, that I had much better stick to London and modern society, which I understood and knew something about.

In fact, he said emphatically, "Better not!"

"Go on writing about London and London life," he urged. "Or at any rate about English people and English life."

And he reminded me of my *Flames, The Londoners, The Green Carnation*.

"That's what you can do best," he said.

But I was not dissuaded. When he said, "Who wants to read about the desert?" I replied, "That's not the point. The point is that I want to write about it."

However, before starting on *The Garden of Allah*, which I was sure

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would take a long time in the writing, I had a contract to fulfil with Methuen, and the success of *Felix* made the firm wish for another book fairly soon, and a book that was not very long.

By this time I had given up journalism, got rid of my flat in Shaftesbury Avenue, and broken my bonds in London. Nevertheless, though I had promised to write a short novel for Methuen, I was obsessed with the idea of *The Garden of Allah*, and kept putting off the writing of anything else. I could not resist travelling away to the edge of the Sahara to steep myself in the atmosphere of the desert. I spent days in the garden of Count Landon de Longueville at Biskra, I journeyed to Touggourt and took many notes for my book there and I paid a second visit to La Trappe de Staouëli. The time wore away and my publishers got impatient. At last my conscience began to smite me, and I rented a villa on Lago di Como, opposite to the beautiful Villa d'Este, for the summer and settled down with the firm intention of clearing the ground for *The Garden of Allah*.

Maude Valérie White, my friend, the composer of beautiful songs, came to stay with me in the villa. My father came, and my elder sister, Count and Countess Bubna, and two or three others, but in spite of visitors and callers I stuck closely to work, and by the autumn had finished my book. Then I left Italy for Sicily and North Africa feeling rather depressed. For I had not much faith in the work I had done and feared I might be in for another failure, which would take the edge off the success of *Felix* and which I should have to try to retrieve with *The Garden of Allah*.

The Woman with the Fan came out in the spring of 1904, when I was at Taormina, already hard at work on *The Garden of Allah*, and to my great astonishment was received with acclamation. The first review I saw was in the middle page of the *Daily Mail* and was amazingly good. It was followed by a wonderful review in the *Westminster Gazette*, written by Alfred Spender, the editor. Edition quickly followed edition.

Greatly encouraged, I went on with my work on *The Garden of Allah* which I had begun in Algeria.

In order to be perfectly quiet I rented a tiny dwelling perched on a mountain opposite to Mola and Monte Venere. It was called the Casa del Prete. A small terrace commanding a magnificent view lay in front of it. The mountain rose up at the back. There were only two small rooms for me, a kitchen, and rooms for the two servants. Both my servants were Sicilians. There was no house near me. But to the left in the distance, on another mountain-side, was a far-away villa which was inhabited by a singer famous in Germany, Herr Wüllner. I never made his acquaintance, but I sometimes heard him in the morning giving a powerful Wagnerian call down to Taormina and the deep blue Ionian sea. He was a man of great talent, almost

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amounting to genius, and when his singing voice failed him, he made a second reputation as a reciter of noble poetry. In this delicious retreat I worked till the heat of summer became too intense. Then I went back to Italy, and eventually finished my labours on *The Garden of Allah* in the woods of the Abetone.

Methuen published this in 1905.

The first review I happened to see of it was a decidedly bad one written in a contemptuous and patronizing style. It appeared in the *The Times Literary Supplement*, and I came upon it in the reading-room of the Hôtel Cavour, in Milan.

I have not looked at this review for I dare say over thirty-five years, but I remember there was something in it about muddled psychology, and a statement of tepid praise about the drawing of some of the Arab characters, which were stated to be "quite good." It was certainly a review which would not have led me, as a reader, to bother to get the book from the library.

I was chilled and feared I was in for another failure.

Maude Valérie White happened to be with me in Milan and she came into the room just as I laid down the paper. I suppose she saw by my expression that something had occurred which had certainly not pleased me, and she said, "What's the matter?"

I gave her the paper. When she had read it she said, "I *know* that book is going to have an enormous success."

Her opinion, by the way, was not shared by my American publishers before the book came out in America. For after they had received the manuscript they sent me a letter in which, after a few flattering remarks, they wrote that they feared it would hardly appeal to American readers, as it was tragic and had so much to do with religious questions. The book, however, had a huge sale in America, more than double as huge as the sale in England, where the book is now in its forty-fourth edition.

After reading the chilling review in *The Times Literary Supplement*, which I found out afterwards had been written by a very well known author, who subsequently told a woman whom I knew that he admired the book "immensely," I parted from Maude Valérie White, and eventually went to a house in the depths of Lombardy which I rented for a few weeks.

Maude's last words to me were, "You'll soon know I am right about your book."

Very soon, indeed almost immediately, I found she was right, for from the day when it came out *The Garden of Allah* had a very large sale which kept on continually increasing.

In Lombardy I tried to begin writing a peasant book laid in Sicily. But I couldn't get on with it. Although I knew the peasants of

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Sicily really well at that time, and had lived among them, been to their festivals, taken part in their dances, walked in their processions on Saints' Days, and even assisted sympathetically at their funeral ceremonies, I could not write about them.

A Roman lady, the Contessa della Somaglia, whose acquaintance I had made at the Abetone, where there were a great many Italians, of whom many were Romans, had a beautiful country place not very far from Milan, and I received from her a kind invitation to spend a week in her house. She wrote that she would be alone there except for her sister, Duchess Massimo. I was tempted by the idea of staying for the first time in an Italian country house, and I accepted and went there.

My visit was a delightful one. Both the sisters were ladies-in-waiting on Queen Margherita. Their brother was Prince Doria. They were typical Roman aristocrats but it was very easy to get on with them. They talked English and French perfectly, and I was beginning to be fairly fluent in quite ordinary Italian. The weather was glorious. The grounds round the big house were enchanting. Countess Somaglia had a little victoria drawn by a pair of frisky ponies, and she drove me herself about the country and as far as Monza.

On the day before I was leaving she said to me, "Where are you going to spend your winter?"

I said that I hadn't made up my mind about that.

"Why not winter in Rome?" she said. "If you come I will introduce you to everyone. You might write a book about us all to follow your *Garden of Allah*."

She knew about this book as I had written the end of it in her company. For she had a favourite nook in the woods of the Abetone which she called the "asile vert," and I had worked there on several mornings while she sat a little way off, reading or doing embroidery. As she read English papers she knew that my book was having a great success.

I thanked her and said perhaps I would come, and when I was again in my little Lombardy house I thought over her suggestion and decided to accept it.

This was what led me to Rome, and eventually to the writing of my book, *The Fruitful Vine*, though that did not come out until several years later.

Promises are easily made by kind-hearted people and are often quickly forgotten, and when I arrived in Rome I remember thinking that perhaps Countess Somaglia, when I left my card at her house, would regret the promise she had given to me, and think, "Bother that Englishman! Why did I say I would look after him in Rome and introduce him to people?" But she was true to her word. She died long ago, but I shall never forget her great kindness to me, which never faltered. Both she and Duchess Massimo invited me immedi-

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ately to their houses, and Countess Somaglia introduced me to numbers of people whom I should certainly never have met if I had visited Rome as a tourist without introductions.

She lived in a large modern house not far from the Grand Hotel, and Duchess Massimo had a delightful house in a garden near the Palace of Queen Margherita in the Via Veneto. At first I lived in a furnished flat and afterwards in the Hôtel Windsor, close to Piazza Barberini. I found it impossible to find a not too expensive flat that I really liked, and was much happier when I settled in the Hôtel Windsor, which was well furnished, quiet, comfortable, and so reasonable in its charges that I was able to afford to take, besides a bedroom and bathroom, two sitting-rooms, one a writing-room, the other a small drawing-room. I had pension in the hotel. I brought a motor-car with me which I kept in a garage close to Piazza Barberini, and my Sicilian chauffeur, who was in my service for a great many years and was, like many Sicilians, a sometimes difficult but an always devoted servant. He, poor fellow, lost his health in the war of 1914-1918, when he served in the Italian navy, and I had reluctantly to pension him off. He had, long before this, married and, at the time of writing, still lives in his home in Sicily, an invalid looked after now by his daughter and her husband. His wife died many years ago. I often write to him and receive dictated letters from him in Italian.

Sicilian and Italian servants are often very devoted and faithful, but they have one fault. They are easily and extremely jealous of other servants, and they show it, for they show nearly everything they feel, as many children do. My servant, when I first had him in my service, during several successive days looked morose, gloomy, even hag-ridden. I asked him two or three times what was the matter. He answered, "Niente!" At last I could bear it no longer and said to him,

"What is it? I can't stand this behaviour. If you can't behave better I can't keep you in my service. What has happened? Have you quarrelled with the cook? Have you fallen in love with someone? Are you going to commit a murder?"

The threat of my giving him warning crashed through his mood and he confessed in Italian, "Signorino, I have pains in my stomach."

A few pills set him right and soon he was radiant again.

One of the first persons I was introduced to in Rome was an American, Mrs. Berdan, a widow, and the mother of Mrs. Marion Crawford, the good-looking wife of the very popular novelist and historian Marion Crawford, whose books were known to, and read by, everyone.

Mrs. Berdan was, I was told, an old lady. She neither seemed nor looked old. She was one of those wonderful ageless American women, vivid, full of life, interested in people and in every mani-

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festation of life, who simply cannot seem really old whatever their age. She lived in a fine apartment not far from the Grand Hotel, and took me in hand at once with the greatest possible cordiality.

The first reception I went to was with her. I forget at whose house it was, but I have not forgotten two of those I met there. In a crowded drawing-room—it was an afternoon reception—on a large sofa were seated two ladies. One was young, extremely handsome in a typical Roman way, with dark hair and brilliant dark eyes. The other looked older and was an entirely different type, fairer and gaily impertinent in appearance. They were talking together and two or three men hovered near them.

"Come along now!" said Mrs. Berdan. "You must know these two ladies. They are celebrities here!"

And she presented me to Princess Teano and Princess San Faustino. Later the former became the Duchess of Sermoneta and the latter was almost universally known as "Princess Jane." Princess Teano was the daughter of Prince Colonna, and Princess San Faustino was an American and had been a Miss Campbell.

As I lived in Rome for more than two years I got to know these two celebrities very well. Indeed, I can count the Duchess of Sermoneta now as an old friend, and when she brought out her entertaining book of memories I introduced it to the British Public with a preface. When I first met her she was the acknowledged beauty of Rome. She lived then in the Palazzo Caetani in the "Street of the Dark Shops," with her brilliantly intellectual and learned husband, the eldest son of the then Duke of Sermoneta. He spent much of his time in a great library high up in the Palace, where he was writing the work of his life, called *The Annals of Islam*. Now and then I visited him there, and stood almost in awe among the masses of volumes that lined the walls and filled every corner.

Princess Teano was many-sided. She had some English blood in her veins, was very pro-English then, and spoke English perfectly. She loved society and had a gay nature, but she was also a keen reader, painted, and worked hard at her painting, played bridge, embroidered beautifully, was an ardent horsewoman and a lover of sport. She had an apartment in the Palace and entertained there nearly all the brilliant and interesting people of Rome and who came to Rome. As well as the aristocracy she welcomed artists, writers, painters, was a friend of Eleanora Duse and of Marion Crawford, and invited all the distinguished English people who passed through, or who stayed in Rome, to her salon. She was also a Court lady, one of the ladies of the Queen of Italy. I don't know how she found time for it all, but she never seemed tired. And many years later on she undertook some vast journeys, and even travelled, a great part of the way on foot, through the wildest parts of Abyssinia.

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Princess San Faustino was of an utterly different type. Her fame came from her tongue. She had an extremely sharp tongue and often uttered biting witticisms. Decidedly she was an original. Her remarks were repeated from mouth to mouth all over Social Rome. Some of them really were funny: some were grotesque: some were merely audacious: and some were—well, shall we say not too discreet.

I was at an evening party given by the Teanos and I was leaving. On my way out I passed through the room in which Princess Jane was playing bridge with three men.

"Where are you hurrying off to, Hichens?" she called out as she saw me.

"I'm hurrying off to bed," I replied.

"Are you? With whom?" she retorted.

And of course the three men did their duty and laughed.

Sometimes she was very confidential and spoke freely about her intimate life. On several occasions I was the recipient of her revelations and they were astonishing. She did not mind what she said, and was totally devoid of what is sometimes called false shame. At times she was—well, hair-raising. But she was never dull. And I found her hospitable and kind.

The last time I saw her before she died was on a very rough day when we were both of us crossing the Channel on our way to Paris. She was a widow then. "Charles" was dead. She was dressed in black, with a curious head-dress that vaguely suggested to me (I hardly know why) Marie Antoinette. Neither of us was seasick and we had a little talk about old times in Rome. Wonderful times they were, for Rome was a brilliant social centre during the two years I spent there.

While I was in Rome the three most prominent women in the eyes of the average Roman were certainly Princess Teano, Princess San Faustino and the young Marchesa di Rudini, formerly Dora Labouchere, the schoolgirl I had taken in to dinner one night at her parents' house. She had now married the first of her three husbands and was helping to lead the younger smart set in Rome. She was pretty, go-ahead, always marvellously dressed, and had one of the tiniest waists I have ever seen. I met her often and found her, as she had already been in embryo when a mere schoolgirl, an accomplished *femme du monde*. At first, like many others, she lived in the Grand Hotel, but eventually she had a beautiful apartment. When she opened it for the first time she gave a house-warming party, to which she kindly invited me. Arthur Rubinstein, then a very young man, was engaged to play to us. Before he began, having just arrived, I was standing with Marchesa di Rudini, when a tall man who, I thought, looked like a soldier came in. As he went up to his hostess my attention was distracted by seeing someone I knew, and I did not see

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Marchesa di Rudini greeting him. When I turned round she presented me to him, but I did not catch his name. He began talking to me in a very masculine voice, speaking good English, and I had a short conversation with him, not having the least idea who he was or even to what nation he belonged. Presently the sound of the piano reached us and he left me to go to the music-room.

"Who was that man?" I asked Marchesa di Rudini.

"Didn't you know?" she said. "That was King Constantine of Greece."

In after years I met his two brothers, Prince Nicholas of Greece and Prince Christopher, but I never spoke to King Constantine again.

Among the multitudes of people I met in Rome during the two years I spent there were two ladies, neither of them young, both of them in totally different ways noticeable, in violent contrast the one to the other, and yet, I thought strangely, intimate friends. For they seemed to arrive in Rome together and to be staying together at the Grand Hotel. At any rate, they lunched and dined together without other guests several times, and I often saw them in company until one of them left, I believe for Florence.

They were Lady Pirbright and Lady Paget.

Lady Paget, the German widow of Sir Augustus Paget, formerly British Ambassador to Italy, was one of the most typical *Grandes Dames* I ever set eyes on. She was very good-looking, held herself proudly, nobly even, had white hair, regular, finely cut features, and rather cold but discerning eyes. Supremely self-possessed, she was highly intelligent, well read, absolutely sure of herself and calmly judicial in her judgment of others.

Lady Pirbright, widow of Lord Pirbright, was, I understood, the daughter of a former Lord Mayor of London, and looked, as someone in Rome said, as if she had just popped up out of a mayonnaise. She had hair of a sort of orange-red, in strong contrast to Lady Paget's white hair. She was plump and very much decorated, wearing valuable jewels, whereas Lady Paget dressed very well but quite simply. She was extremely rich, and when I got to know her I found that she was certainly clever, perhaps even very clever. In attendance upon her was a youngish man who seemed indispensable to her, for he almost literally "danced" attendance upon her, being always at hand unless she rather brusquely ordered him away, as happened not seldom. He was her secretary and his sister was her ladyship's maid.

I knew Lady Paget in Rome, but not very well. Afterwards I went to her beautiful villa above Florence and met her in London at the house of her daughter, Lady Plymouth. But Lady Pirbright stayed long in Rome and returned there after going away, I believe to England. She was very hospitable and friendly, and often asked me

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to dinner; sometimes alone with her, sometimes with the dancing secretary, whom she would send away after dinner when we sat in the hall of her hotel, with an order phrased like this:

"We don't want you now, Mr. So-and-so. You can go into the corridor. Remain within call. Pass to and fro where I can see you if I want to. I'll summon you later."

"Certainly, my lady."

I felt very uncomfortable when this happened, and hated the "we."

Once I drove out with Lady Pirbright into the *campagna*. She had a huge barouche with a pair of enormous horses. As we went to get in the secretary was there with a fur rug, his hat and coat on, gloves in hand.

"Put in the rug, Mr. So-and-so. No, you're not coming with us."

"Certainly not, my lady."

It was trying, but when Lady Pirbright died I understand that she left the secretary very well off. Life, exasperating though it often is, has its compensations.

A little adventure happened to me in connection with Lady Pirbright.

She was in Rome and I was in Rome when the first of April approached. As it drew near, several friends warned me to be careful about *poissons d'avril*.

"People in Rome," they said, "love pulling the legs of their friends on the first of April. If you get any extraordinary invitation for that day be careful. Before accepting it, make sure that it's genuine."

Well, as it happened, just before April the 1st I did receive an invitation which surprised me. It purported to come from Lady Pirbright at the Grand Hotel, and was a card asking me to lunch at the hotel on April the 1st, "To have the honour to meet" the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, their two daughters, and the Crown Prince of Sweden, who had just become engaged to the elder Princess.

Could this be a *poisson d'avril*? I had not yet met the Connaughts. I had no official position. I was merely a writer. Was this invitation genuine? I remembered the warnings I had received, and hesitated before replying. But the card was so important, and looked so genuine, that at last I sent an acceptance.

But when on April the 1st I arrived at the Grand Hotel I felt slightly anxious.

I was reassured by seeing a big section of the large hall roped off and Lady Pirbright enthroned behind it.

All was well.

Others arrived quickly, notabilities both Roman and English. I was introduced to Miss Pelly, the Duchess of Connaught's lady-in-waiting, and told I was to take her in. The throng behind the rope grew in dimensions, and at last the Royalties came. I was carefully

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presented to them all and had two or three words with Princess Margaret.

The moment arrived for the move to the restaurant, and Miss Pelly, by whom I was standing, murmured, "Mr. Hichens, you can guess where *we* come?"

"Last!" I murmured back.

"Guessed in one!" she replied with a smile.

The procession, carefully arranged—one supposed!—began to move up the steps to the restaurant. Miss Pelly and I awaited our turn to start. At last it came and I offered my arm to her.

(The others had gone in arm-in-arm.)

As I did so a lively voice said in my ear, "And what about me?"

I looked; it was Princess Margaret of Connaught.

Miss Pelly was as shocked as I was, and exclaimed,

"Mr. Hichens, you must take in the Princess! I'll come by myself."

But the Princess wouldn't have it. "No!" she said to me. "Give me your other arm and we'll go in as a triplet."

And we did. I shall never forget the horrified look on Lady Pirbright's face as we arrived—the last when all the rest of the guests were already in their places. Luckily three empty chairs were left for us. And the Princess Margaret's was next to that of her fiancé, the Crown Prince of Sweden.

After that lunch I met the Connaughts three times. For I received a last-minute invitation to tea at the British Embassy where they were staying for the same afternoon, and an invitation to an evening reception for them at the Embassy a day or two later.

At the tea, given by Sir Edwin Egerton, our Ambassador to Italy, and Lady Egerton, a Russian, there were not many people, and nearly all of them were diplomats. When we assembled the Duke of Connaught was not present. Just before we were going in to tea an important-looking man-servant came up to Lady Egerton and said something to her. She looked embarrassed, and I heard her say,

"I'm very sorry. But her name is not on the list. There's some mistake."

"I thought so, my lady. But she says she received a card."

"No. That's impossible. You must say that I very much regret there has been a mistake. I'm exceedingly sorry. Her name was not on the list approved by their Royal Highnesses."

"Very good, my lady."

It turned out that some very unkind person had sent a *poisson d'avril* to an American lady in Rome, who had naturally taken it seriously.

Directly the Duke of Connaught arrived, Lady Egerton told him what had happened. I heard their conversation. The Duke said that he knew the lady, who was rather old and very rich, slightly.

"I'll tell you what I will do," he said. "I'll call on her tomorrow

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at the Grand Hotel, where I believe she is staying, and tell her how very sorry we are about this stupid mistake."

And he did call on her and smoothed her ruffled feathers.

On the few occasions when I met him he seemed to me a very kind and genial man.

At the evening reception, where there was a crowd, I found out why I had been invited to meet the Connaughts. It was owing to *The Garden of Allah*, which they had read. I was taken up to where the Duchess of Connaught was sitting and told to sit down beside her. We had a conversation, and she took me to task about the end of my book. She said I had been too cruel in parting the two lovers, Domini and the Monk. It was a heart-rending end and must have distressed many readers. (It did, for I received hundreds of letters protesting against it.)

I stuck to my guns, however, and told Her Royal Highness that from the first moment when I conceived the book I made up my mind that Religion must triumph over human love, and that the Monk, after having known the joys of passion in the world, must resign them for the sake of his monkish soul.

"I understand," she said. "But it's too sad. It's too heart-rending."

Then Lady Egerton came up. I had had my few minutes and must give way to others.

By accident I did a rather absurd thing at a dinner-party I went to in Rome, at the Grand Hotel.

It was given by the Swedish Minister to Italy, Baron de Bildt, who was for a long time Swedish Minister in London. He was a historian, a learned, highly educated and interesting man, and also very good company, as he was genial and had a sense of humour. His second wife was charming. She still lives, in Rome. And he had a daughter who became Princess Boncompagni and who lives much in Switzerland. I know very well his son, for many years Swedish Minister to Egypt and the doyen of the diplomatic corps in Cairo.

At this dinner there were a good many people, several of whom I didn't know. I was introduced to them. One of them was a beautifully dressed and *coiffée* lady, with a figure that reminded me of Queen Alexandra's, handsome dark eyes and a serious expression. She was wearing beautiful jewels. I did not catch her name. I only heard the word "Baroness" preceding it.

"You will take her in to dinner," Baron de Bildt said to me.

We went in and I sought for an opening of conversation, and no doubt made some banal, non-committal remarks, to which my partner replied in excellent English. (Though I was quite sure she was not English. She looked, I thought, Spanish, and as if, when younger, she might have been a wonderful Carmen, had she been on the stage.)

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Presently I got on to the subject of music. The previous night I had been to the opera.

"Are you fond of music?" I said.

"Yes, very," she replied.

I then, to continue the conversation, asked her what form of music she preferred, and said that I knew people who strangely didn't care for opera.

"Do you?" she asked.

"Yes, I'm very fond of opera," I said.

And I told her that for years I had gone often to Covent Garden, as I had written about music for a London paper called the *World*.

She seemed interested. And just then it struck me that her face was familiar to me, though I could not recall where or when I had seen it: if indeed I had seen it.

I told her I had heard all the operatic stars, and said, "I dare say you like opera?"

She smiled and looked decidedly amused.

"I ought to," she said.

"Indeed? Why?" I asked.

"I am Adelina Patti!" she said. "I have earned my living in opera."

I have seldom felt a greater fool than I did at that moment. How could I have failed to recognize Madame Patti, now Baroness Cederström, whom I had seen many times, and who had even sung my idiotic words, "A Kiss and Goodbye," at the Albert Hall? As a rule I have an excellent memory for faces. It had failed me this time. But the diva forgave me and we had a long and a pleasant talk. Even I persuaded her gently to "talk shop," and she told me that in her long and perpetually brilliant career—her only failure, oddly enough, was, I believe, in *Carmen*—her greatest financial triumph had been in South America, where she had been engaged to give sixty performances in opera, for each of which she had been guaranteed a sum equivalent to twelve hundred English pounds and a percentage after the sale of seats had reached a certain sum. When dinner was over I met her Swedish husband, Baron Cederström, whom later on I came to know rather well, and who visited me in a house I had on the borders of Sussex, and afterwards in another house I rented at Sidi-Bou-Saïd in Tunisia. I also met him in Egypt, at Louxor, with his second wife, who had been Lady Esmé Gordon-Lennox. He was a great many years younger than Madame Patti, but he was genuinely devoted to her, and told me that living with her was like living with a marvellous singing-bird. On this occasion in Rome, after dinner, when we were all in a private drawing-room, I found myself next to him and we talked.

Presently some of the guests began smoking. He looked across at his wife, who was sitting at some distance from us, and said to me

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in a low voice, "Do you think people here would be shocked if my wife smoked a cigarette?"

I said, "Surely not!"

"Then I think I'll just tell her," he said.

And he crossed the room to her, and soon the marvellous Patti was smoking.

A few times I met her in Rome.

On one of these occasions a young American woman who was married to a Roman aristocrat began talking to us about singing, and told Patti she was studying singing with a wonderful master, who had an entirely original method of his own.

Patti asked her indulgently what this method was.

"He takes me by the throat, holds it, and makes me sing 'Ah!' at the top of my voice."

Patti looked horrified.

"Don't let him do it, dear! Don't let him do it!"

"But that's part of his method!"

"Don't let him do it, dear!"

"Well, but he says that brings out my voice and increases its volume."

"Don't let him increase its volume like that, dear!"

"And then, for the lower notes, he makes me bend my head down like this"—she showed us—"and bring my chin down till it nearly touches my collar-bone."

"Don't let your chin do it, dear! Don't let your chin do it!"

"But it's all part of his method!"

"Poor child! Poor dear child!" exclaimed Patti.

Afterwards she told me that she had always sung naturally, as the birds do, but that every day she practised singing scales.

"Yes, I do that. But I have never had any real difficulty in singing coloratura," she said.

I told her that I had never heard anyone sing Mozart so perfectly as she did, never dwelling too long on a note, never letting the lovely melodies get out of shape.

"One cannot insult Mozart," she said simply.

Her vocalization was simply perfection.

I don't think I ever saw her again to speak with after the interview with the American who was trying the new method of voice production, but several times I talked with Baron Cederström about her, and I had one really curious experience with him in the Count's garden at Biskra, where I took him to test the occult powers of the sand-diviner who haunted its sandy paths.

The sand-diviner, an elderly man, had, of course, never seen him before and knew absolutely nothing about him.

He went to work in his curiously delicate way, making little dots

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in the sand and forming them into patterns, and at last began to speak in his broken but understandable French. And presently I began to think that unfortunately he was talking nonsense and making a fool of himself.

I knew that the Baron's home in Britain was at Craig-y-Nos Castle, built by Madame Patti's orders in a remote valley of Wales. When she died it was left to him, and I believe eventually he got rid of it. All I knew about it was that it was large and contained, or had attached to it, a theatre in which, when Madame Patti was there, operas were sometimes performed, or parts of operas.

The sand-diviner hovered, as it were, over his sand patterns, then looked up at Baron Cederström and said that his home was among palm trees.

"Many palm trees," he said. "I see palm trees where you live."

The Baron made no comment on this.

"I see you among palm trees—yours," reiterated the sand-diviner. "You living there."

"Evidently he believes in such a place as he's accustomed to. As he has been brought up among palm trees he thinks you must have been too. Absurd! Isn't it?"

The Baron only shook his head. To my surprise, he seemed very much interested.

The diviner rambled on in his muttering talk and at last came to an end. "You have fine palm trees," he concluded. "Very nice."

The Baron paid him, thanked him, and we walked away by the rills among the palm trees of the garden.

"He was hardly a success today," I said. "As he has always been surrounded by palm trees he thought he was making a safe shot. If he could only see Wales!"

Then the Baron told me something I hadn't known; that Madame Patti, as well as a theatre, had paid a large sum for the creation of a fine winter-garden at Craig-y-Nos Castle, in which there were many palm trees.

The sand-diviner had read in the sand for me, but he had never said anything to me about palm trees.

While I am on the subject of divination—if it is!—I may mention a curious thing, also connected with Biskra, which occurred to me.

Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, the famous English actor and actress, were friends of mine. They had a delightful house on the sea edge at Sandgate in Kent, and often gave luncheon-parties in it on Sundays. As I sometimes stayed in a hotel at Folkestone I went to three or four of these and met interesting people at them. One Sunday I was there, and sat at luncheon exactly opposite to a dark lady with large very dark eyes, to whom I had not been introduced and whom I had never seen before.

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During luncheon I noticed that her eyes were continually upon me. To put it plainly—she stared at me so fixedly that I felt rather uncomfortable. But she said nothing to me across the table and I said nothing to her.

When we all got up, however, to go into the drawing-room she came up to me, and said in a low voice, "Excuse me! I don't know you or who you are, but may I speak to you for a minute?"

"Of course!" I said, rather surprised. "What is it?"

She then told me that she was "an occultist." "But I m not a professional occultist," she said. "I live near here and I'm a great friend of the Bancrofts. During lunch I kept *seeing* something for you."

"Really! What was it?"

"Something unpleasant that is going to happen to you."

I waited. She added, "You are going to be in very great danger. From a bite."

"Am I going to be bitten by a mad dog?" I asked.

"No, no! It's not a dog."

"What animal is it, then?" I asked, feeling completely incredulous.

"I didn't say it was an animal. I didn't see what it was. I can only tell you that I *know* you are going to be in great danger; and from a bite."

"When?" I asked.

I think the lunch took place some time in June. Certainly it was in the summer.

"I can't tell you that, but fairly soon; this year. I'm sorry that I have no power to guard you against the danger. I only see it for you."

I thanked her and we joined the rest of the party. Afterwards Lady Bancroft told me the lady's name and said she had wonderful powers and could foresee many things. I did not tell Lady Bancroft what I had been told, and I soon forgot about it. I was very busy, but I was also incredulous, and so the matter went quite out of my mind. Moreover, the autumn came and nothing had tried to bite me.

In October I left England and travelled to Biskra on one of my several visits there. The weather was still intensely hot when I got there, but I did a good deal of writing. One day, as it was a little cooler, I decided to go out into the desert, and I took a carriage with two good horses and an Arab coachman, and drove far out on the route to Touggourt. I had very little on. My legs were bare in thin flannel trousers and I had a thin open shirt. We must have driven, I should think, for at least two hours, perhaps even more, when I saw a little way off on the left side of the *piste* a rather large mound of dried earth with many cracks in it. I called to the driver to stop and indicated that I meant to go to this mound and have a rest there. I had in my

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hand a rather large fly-whisk with a long wooden handle. The coachman carried a large whip. He pulled up, and I got out and walked to the mound and climbed to the top of it. It was, of course, not high but from the top I could see a long distance over the desert to the far-away dim blue horizon. I sat down on the warm earth to dream.

Presently I saw the coachman, who had hobbled the horses, coming towards me holding his whip and smoking a cigarette. He sat down at a little distance from me. I didn't want him so near, but I merely turned a little way so as not to see him and continued to gaze at the desert, which always fascinates me, especially when I feel alone in it. After a lapse of time—how long it was I don't know—I heard a loud voice cry out in French,

"Get up, will you!"

I turned sharply, startled.

"Get up!" called the coachman again, at the same time springing to his feet and coming towards me whip in hand.

"What do you mean?" I exclaimed angrily. "Why should I get up?"

"You've got a serpent on you!" said the man, leaping towards me.

I sprang up. There was a horned viper on my leg outside my flannels.

The Arab struck it hard with the butt end of his whip. It fell to the ground, and we both attacked it vigorously, he again with his whip and I with the handle of my fly-whisk. In a minute we had killed it.

"A lucky escape!" I thought, as I thanked the man and got back into the carriage.

The horned viper, though small, is, I believe, the most deadly snake in the Sahara, certainly one of the most deadly snakes.

It was not until some days later that I remembered the warning I had received at the Bancrofts' luncheon-party—"you will be in great danger from a bite!"

When I was back in England, and happened to be with a friend of mine, the throat specialist, Sir StClair Thomson, I told him about my adventure.

"How far out were you?" he asked. "How long would it have been before you could have got medical assistance?"

I told him I thought perhaps two hours, or even more.

"If the snake had bitten you, probably you'd have died," he said. "Luckily it was outside of your trouser leg!"

Among the many people of many nations whom I met during my long stay in Rome were two famous Italian actresses, Madame Ristori, in the bygone years the rival of the great French actress Rachel, and Madame Eleanora Duse, the rival in the eyes of the public of Madame

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Sarah Bernhardt. I never, unfortunately, saw Madame Ristori on the stage. She had retired long before I came to live in Italy, and when I met her was a quietly dignified great lady, the Marchesa Capranica del Grillo. She had a very sweet unmarried daughter, Donna Bianca, and a son, Marchese del Grillo, who was attached to the Court of the Queen Margherita. Her husband was dead.

I knew Madame Ristori when I lived on the shore of Lago di Como. A villa in which she spent the summer was almost next door to mine, and I saw her there several times, and when she left she invited me to visit her if I ever came to Rome.

Of course I took advantage of this offer and was kindly received, but in Rome she gave me a shock.

One day when I was having tea with her she said, "You have been so much in Italy now that I am sure you speak Italian fluently. Today we must speak Italian together."

I was horrified at the idea of airing my poor Sicilian-Italian in the presence of the queen of the Italian tragic stage. I had never really studied Italian. I had merely "picked it up" from hearing it constantly talked, often by Sicilians. However, there was no help for it. I was forced to do my best—and very poor it was. But Madame Ristori was indulgent and did not even smile at my blunders.

There was absolutely nothing theatrical about her. She was always, with me, quiet, dignified and rather serious in both look and manner.

One day I got her to talk about her past glories, and I was specially interested in what she said about Lady Macbeth, which was one of her greatest parts. It struck her that she could make an extraordinary effect in the sleep-walking scene if she could prevent her eyelids from moving during the whole of it. But could she? Most, if not all of us, blink perpetually without being aware of it. She decided to rehearse her eyelids. And eventually she was able to play the whole scene holding her eyes wide open in a fixed stare, without, to use a slang expression, "batting an eyelid."

"But," she told me, "my eyes suffered greatly from the strain, and sometimes water came into them and ran down my cheeks. But I got the strange and terrible effect I wanted."

Madame Duse I saw for the first time in Palermo. She was acting there in a play of D'Annunzio, and they were both staying in my hotel. One night when I was sitting up late in the hall I saw them come in from the theatre and they passed close to me. D'Annunzio was a small man, bald, with a little beard and eyes that were very short-sighted. It was difficult to believe that he had such enormous success with women. He did not look at all like a "lady-killer." He was smart. What we English call "dapper" was the right word for him. Mr. Heinemann, the publisher, gave me a warmly worded intro-

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duction to present to him if I came across him in Italy, but I never sent it to him, although more than once he and I were both sojourning in the Hôtel Cavour of Milan at the same time. I couldn't believe that he would be at all interested in me, and didn't like to intrude on him. But I had many opportunities of observing him in Milan, as he often had meals in the Cavour Restaurant close to my table.

When he was talking he looked vivid and attractive. When alone, and in repose, I thought he looked *petit maître* and not at all remarkable.

During my long life I have more than once been in hotels with celebrities and seen them at close quarters without knowing them. On my first visit to Biskra, where I stayed in the chief hotel, I used to see every day for a short time a group of three people, a lady and two men. One of the men looked, I thought, like a French *pasteur*. Yet I was quite certain he wasn't a *pasteur*. He had a remarkable forehead and eyes, and very straight, unusually long hair. One day I asked the concierge what nation he belonged to and who he was.

"He's French, monsieur, and he's called Monsieur André Gide. The lady is his wife. And the other gentleman is some relation, I believe."

In those days the name André Gide meant nothing to me. Now it means a very great deal. For I think Monsieur Gide one of the most remarkable of living writers, and am constantly reading bits of his *Journal*, and have read nearly all his books. I never spoke to him in my life. But long ago he very kindly sent me a copy of his little book about Oscar Wilde, with a few words written on the first page of it, and I wrote to thank him for it. A Chinese friend of mine knows him, having met him several times in Paris. One day I said to this friend,

"I am very much interested in Monsieur Gide. Do tell me what he's like now. I haven't seen him since Biskra."

"Like?" he said. "Well—" he seemed to consider—"he looks like a naughty clergyman."

While I was living in Rome, Madame Duse, who had given up acting at that time, I think on account of her delicate health, came to spend a long while there, and lived, like myself, in the Via Veneto. She never went into general society. I can't remember now who introduced me to her, but I know how it was that I came to be several times in her company during one winter.

Princess Teano, who knew her, admired her greatly, and was always eager to do kind things for those whom she liked and who wanted her help, asked me if I would care to join a group of friends who had decided to do something which would please "La Duse." I said "Surely!" and asked what it was.

She then told me that Madame Duse had a protégée, an Italian girl, whom she considered very talented and who had very little money.

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This girl had a great knowledge of Italian poetry, and read it aloud, or sometimes recited it, very beautifully. Madame Duse had asked her, the Princess, if she would get up some poetry readings at which this girl could be heard and by which she could earn some money. They might take place, perhaps, in the drawing-rooms of lovers of poetry. And Madame Duse said that if they did she would be present at all of them.

Princess Teano had gladly agreed. She had fixed the sum of money which those who cared to be at these readings would pay for the privilege. The number was to be limited. Madame Duse wished that. I forget what the limit was. But I remember that only comparatively few people were there when these readings were given, perhaps twenty or twenty-four. I went to all of them. Afterwards there was tea. They were given in the afternoons. Madame Duse kept her promise and appeared at them all.

She was always simply dressed. She never used any "make-up." I believe she detested all the feminine "aids to beauty," or perhaps she despised them. At any rate, she neither painted, nor dyed her hair, which was plainly arranged, always in the same way, above her beautiful brow. When I sat during the poetry readings watching her I often thought of the extraordinary difference there was between her and Sarah Bernhardt, who looked always a wonderful creature of the theatre, full of genius, but full, too, of artifice.

Madame Duse did not look like an actress—or the ordinary conception of what an actress should look like—but like a deeply thoughtful, and sometimes deeply suffering, woman, totally free from self-consciousness and sometimes plunged in reverie. Now and then when I met her I thought she was on the verge of tears. William Heinemann called her "la femme pleurante."

Each of the poetry readings was prefaced by a short *discours* on the personality and special type of talent of the poet whose work we were to hear. Madame Duse's protégée, whose name I unfortunately no longer remember, was a clever and talented girl, by no means without a sharp critical faculty and sometimes audacious.

I shall not easily forget the afternoon dedicated to D'Annunzio's talent and poems.

Every one of us, of course, knew, as all Italy, I might almost say all Europe, knew, of the long intimacy, broken by storms, which had existed between the great actress and the great poet. And while we listened to many admiring, but also to some decidedly caustic remarks about D'Annunzio as man and poet, it was impossible not to feel that what was happening must be something of a trial to Madame Duse, surrounded by sharp-witted men and women who—knew. I was sitting very near her and could not help occasionally glancing at her.

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Her face seemed to me to be like a beautiful, very expressive mask —but a mask. For no changing expressions flitted over it. Rather sad and severe it looked. That was all.

Madame Duse was not what is generally called "a beauty." When I met her she had absolutely none of the freshness and charm of youth. She looked definitely middle-aged. But she had nevertheless what seemed to me a beauty that issued from within, as if it came from the soul, a beauty of dignity, refinement, simplicity combined with subtlety, that was memorable, a sort of exquisite earnestness. On the stage in certain parts she could be enchantingly light, even gay. She could never be coarse, or suggest coarseness. And she was astonishingly untheatrical, deliberately throwing away scenes which Sarah would have made great, because there was something of tawdriness about them. In private life, on the occasions when I met her, she looked always sad, pathetic sometimes. With Sarah Bernhardt I at once got on good terms. Not so with Madame Duse. I felt that I had no power to interest her, and though she was polite and moved in an atmosphere of exquisite refinement, she seemed remote. I was never with her alone. Sarah Bernhardt often suggested vehemence; Duse never. But that she could be very violent I learned in Bologna.

I was travelling with a woman friend by motor in Italy, going from place to place sight-seeing. We came to Bologna. My friend was Consuelo Duchess of Manchester, and, as she suffered from insomnia, wherever we stayed she engaged not only a sitting-room, a maid's room and a bedroom for herself, but also a bedroom next door which remained empty so that no sound coming from it should disturb her. At Bologna, where we put up in the Hôtel Brun, the bill presented was so enormous that she asked me to go down and remonstrate with the proprietor, an elderly man. I asked to see him and was shown into a large, rather gaudily furnished and decorated sitting-room on the ground floor. I noticed especially a terribly new-looking and astonishing carpet.

We had our interview, which was quite amicable, and he agreed to make the bill slightly more reasonable.

Before leaving him I made some remarks about the room and said, "I see you have done it up lately."

He said, "You mean the carpet, signore. Ah—" he threw up his hands—"I *had* to have a new one! What a pity!"

"Why did you have to get a new one?" I asked.

He then told me that Madame Duse and D'Annunzio had recently been staying in his hotel, and that one day they had a violent quarrel in that sitting-room. D'Annunzio wrote in it and had an enormous, and very heavy, inkstand full of ink in it. During their quarrel Madame Duse became so infuriated, the proprietor said, that she picked up this inkstand and hurled it at the poet.

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"Did it hit him?" I asked.

"No, signore—unfortunately. It missed Signor D'Annunzio and the ink went all over my carpet, which was entirely ruined. I had to get this new one in a hurry, as some important guests had engaged the room and came in directly Signora Duse and Signor D'Annunzio left. They are great, no doubt, but better, far better, to have ordinary people in one's hotel!"

No doubt! But oh, how dull quite ordinary people often manage to be! And how they can make one long for the violences and eccentricities of genius!

Somebody once said to me with poignant expression, "Life at close quarters with Genius is hell!"

I replied, "I'm sorry to say that up to now I've never had a chance to make even a short stay in hell!"

How rare it is to come across, personally, genius, though one may meet with it in art, in literature, in music, in painting.

When I was very young I heard Anton Rubinstein, the great Russian pianist, give a recital in St. James's Hall. He had genius obviously. But I never knew him. Chaliapine was a genius. Nor did I know him. I think Sarah Bernhardt had genius, and when I was with her I felt conscious of it. Henry Irving had moments of genius when he was acting. Off the stage also he made you somehow feel it mysteriously. Genius is—*different*. It makes ordinary people uncomfortable as a rule. They do not know how to approach it, how to deal with it. They feel it as a barrier in personal intercourse. Tolstoy was a very great genius. But evidently even his own family found him a very difficult proposition in day-to-day life. I have often wished I had met him. I know his eldest daughter, Countess Tatiana Tolstoy-Sukhotin, who loved and admired him and did much work for him. She has told me a good deal about him, and she gave me a reproduction of an excellent little drawing which she made of him sitting at his writing-table. I said to her that I had often longed to have met him, but that I was sure I should have been afraid of him; she asked me why. I replied that he had eyes which I was certain could see to the depths of one's weakness, incapacity, poor attempts at subterfuge.

"Why subterfuge?" she said.

"Dressing the shop window!" I said.

Genius is perhaps generally alarming, but the attraction of it is so tremendous to some of us that it wins forgiveness for follies, and even sometimes for crimes. I have felt more than once after hearing Wagner's *Meistersinger* that if I had known him I should have been ready to forgive him anything—so long as the memory of the *Meistersinger* was lively within me. It is amusing, when reading *Mein Leben*, to note how Wagner himself thought forgiveness for everything due to him.

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While I was in Rome Siegfried Wagner and his sisters came there to stay, as he was engaged to give a concert of his compositions at the Augusteo, where I shared a box for the season with the mother of the Duchess of Sermoneta, a petite and very charming woman who had a passion for music. She stayed at the Grand Hotel and sometimes engaged a pianist of talent to play to us after dinner. Of course we both went to the concert, wondering what sort of music the son of the great Richard Wagner had composed. Would it be music of the further future, as the operas of the father had been named by many the music of the future? Not a bit of it! We were treated to some genial and rather charming works which perpetually reminded me of Humperdinck's delicious opera *Hänsel und Gretel*, and I said so to my companion. I heard afterwards that Humperdinck had been Siegfried's composition master.

Shortly afterwards a kind acquaintance of mine, American but married to an Italian, invited me to tea to meet Siegfried Wagner and his sisters. I went, and found them very pleasant people. Siegfried was extraordinarily like his father in features, but had not the look of almost pugnacious force characteristic of the great Wagner. At tea a very wonderful boy violinist, who was just then making a furore in Rome with his recitals, joined us. This was von Vecsey, a marvellously talented and also extremely fascinating lad, with whom I made friends. I met him and the Wagner children more than once, and Siegfried invited me to go with himself and his sisters to von Vecsey's violin recital at the Opera House, which drew a crowd that filled every seat in the vast building. We sat in a box, and I had a good deal of conversation between the parts with my host and hostesses, who were very friendly.

Siegfried Wagner had a curiously livid complexion. One night, at a supper given by the great conductor, Herr Furtwängler, I found myself sitting next to a lady who had a quite amazing resemblance to him. I presently found that she was his daughter. I saw also at Bayreuth a son of his, who had inherited the family likeness.

The success of young von Vecsey in Rome was beyond anything I have ever witnessed at any other violin recital. Towards the end of the evening it increased till the enormous audience seemed seized by a sort of delirium. This was the last time I heard von Vecsey. He was a magician on the platform. Off it he was an unaffected and charming boy. I have often since then asked what had become of him. But he disappeared out of my life, and a few years ago I was told he had died.

Siegfried Wagner agreed with me that he was a genius.

The only other boy violinist I have known who had a similar sort of success at an early age was Kubelik, also now dead. I met him in private several times when I was living in London, and often heard

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him play. At that time he seemed an inspired gipsy and drove women almost mad. Long afterwards I heard him at a concert in Montreux, when he was a mature man who had lost a good deal of his charm, and seemed even, in spite of his great skill, touched with a suspicion of dullness. After that concert I went behind and greeted him, and reminded him of our meetings and suppers together at the house of the Walter Palmers.

"Ah, that was a nice time!" he ejaculated, with a sudden look of regret.

In Rome I met the composer and pianist, Sgambati, who invited me to his house; Battistini, the great baritone singer; Carolus Duran, the painter, who was head of the Villa Medici and presided over the destinies of the budding French artists of outstanding talent; Signor Boni, the famous little archaeologist, who seemed to speak more than one foreign language, but generally made me wonder which he was speaking at the moment; De Amicis, the popular writer; Marion Crawford, the American author, and his good-looking wife, with whom I stayed once in their beautiful home at Sorrento; Mr. Hubbard, the *Times* correspondent in Rome; Mr. Storey, the American sculptor; Carlo Placci, the Italian equivalent, almost, of our Hamilton Aïdé, a very clever, and even accomplished man, who, however, seemed to give his life up to society; a great many Italians prominent at that time, and nearly all the diplomats accredited to the Italian Government.

It was mainly owing to Countess Somaglia, and to my intimate and faithful friend Alexander Nelson Hood, Duke of Bronte, that I was able to know so many interesting and often attractive people. The Duke of Bronte was in Rome on his way to Sicily very soon after I arrived there, and he took me to the apartment of Count Gianotti, master of the ceremonies at the Quirinal, in Palazzo Colonna, and introduced me to the Count, to his American wife and his daughter Donna Marcella, whom I still meet occasionally in Switzerland. They were most hospitable and invited me out, and introduced me to many of their friends, including the Marchese San Giuliano, who was for a considerable time Minister for Foreign Affairs. My schoolfriend, Reginald Lister, later Sir Reginald Lister, I met again after a lapse of many years. He was now in diplomacy and attached to our Embassy. The Egertons left while I was in Rome, and their place was taken by Sir Rennell and Lady Rodd, who afterwards became Lord and Lady Rennell.

Lady Rodd was good-looking and highly educated, learned even, and interested in everything of real value. Her husband was one of the most attractive, brilliant, cultivated and variously gifted diplomats I have ever come across. A poet himself, he was passionately fond

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of poetry and could read it admirably, as I found out when I was fortunate enough to attend some of his "afternoons" at the Keats-Shelley House in the Piazza di Spagna. He was specially fond of Browning's poetry and thoroughly understood it. (Many people didn't.) I remember his reading one afternoon "Rabbi ben Ezra," and another reading of "Youth and Art." He quickly became very popular in Rome, especially among the Italians, who felt instinctively his great love of their country and of its treasures of painting and sculpture, and his quick and innate sympathy for them. He was a very sympathetic and receptive man and full of various knowledge. But he had nothing pedantic about him and did not try to shine at the expense of those he was with, as so many brilliant men do. It seemed to me that we could not be represented better than we were in Rome at that time.

The Rodds entertained a great deal and I dined at the Embassy several times, once *en famille*. Another time I went to a big dinner, and found myself sitting next to a very remarkable-looking woman, with an amazingly slim figure and eyes like two lighted torches. When these eyes looked at me they seemed almost to burn me. This lady was Marchesa Casati, who became known as a *mondaine* all over Europe and startled the social world by her many caprices. Some people raved about her as a beauty. Others said she had genius. The kind praised her as an original. The unkind said she was merely a *poseuse*. Like Sarah Bernhardt, she had, or seemed to have, a passion for dangerous wild animals and reptiles. She certainly had a mania for serpents, and herself looked serpentine. She stayed at one time in the Grand Hotel, and someone I met, who was there when she was, had an unpleasant surprise because of her visit. His rooms adjoined hers, and one evening, when he went to his bathroom to take a hot bath, he found the bath occupied by a large serpent. He rushed out of the room, shut the door and summoned assistance. The serpent was captured—I don't know by what means—and returned to its doting owner, Marchesa Casati.

The last time I met Marchesa Casati was at the Montreux Palace Hotel in Switzerland, where I spent an evening with her and her great friend Lord Alington. She told me that she had left Italy and was living in a *petit Palais* that had once belonged to de Montesquiou, the French poet, whom Count Tolstoy gibbeted in his book *What is Art?* It was somewhere near Paris, and was called, I think, "Le Palais Rose." She invited me to pay her a visit there. But I have never had the opportunity of going. In any case, though I was grateful for her kindness, I think my hatred and fear of serpents would bar me from paying such a visit. Doctor Munthe, the author of *The Story of San Michele*, which has had such a world-wide success, told me in Egypt that Marchesa Casati once lived in his marvellous

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home at Capri. She had an almost strange passion for beauty. But it was linked with an almost equally strange passion for eccentricity.

This was evidently innate. I have never met anyone else at all like her.

Mr. Hubbard, the *Times* correspondent in Rome, was a friend of mine there, and I often was with him. He was a bachelor then, but afterwards married a Mademoiselle Koch whom I also knew. He was very well informed, kind and exceedingly and sensitively critical. Now and then, if something startled or shocked his critical sense, he momentarily lost control of himself.

This happened one day at the British Embassy.

Miss Storey, a good-looking and talented girl who was very well known in Rome, became engaged to be married, and the Rodds, who knew her and her people intimately, offered the Embassy to them for the wedding reception. All social Rome was present at it, and in the crowd I was standing with Mr. Hubbard.

Miss Storey sang, and sang rather well, but only *en amateur*.

After everyone had done justice to the buffet, and we were all in the great drawing-room, the Ambassador asked for silence, and made a speech to us wishing a long and happy life to the bride and bridegroom. In the course of this speech, alluding to the bride, he spoke of her as "this lady whom we all love, with her voice of gold and her heart of gold." For some reason—to be found no doubt in his intellectual "make-up"—Mr. Hubbard was so horrified by this perhaps rather lush description of the bride, who was standing beside the speaker, that he uttered a loud gasp, put his hands over his ears, and seemed actually to shrink as if he wished to disappear through the floor. He was evidently shocked to the soul.

The Joseph Whitakers of Palermo, whom I knew well in Sicily, and with whom I often stayed in their big house outside Palermo, came every year to Rome during the season with their two daughters, one of whom eventually married General di Giorgio, who was for a time War Minister in the Italian Cabinet and later Commander-in-Chief in Sicily. Mrs. Whitaker, an Italian, was one of my closest and dearest friends for more years than I can count. She was the daughter of a general who had fought with Garibaldi. She had a remarkable soprano voice, and sang once in a performance of opera in the opera-house at Palermo. When the Wagners were spending a winter in Palermo she knew them intimately and even sang to Wagner's accompaniment on the piano. She liked Wagner, but she told me he had to be treated rather as one is expected to treat a Royalty. At their home, Malfitano, the Whitakers entertained royally. Mr. Whitaker, an extraordinarily kind and entirely unpretentious man, was emphatically not like everybody. Although he knew everyone of importance in Sicily and met everyone of importance who visited

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the island, including the German Emperor and Empress, King Edward the Seventh and Queen Alexandra, in fact all travelling celebrities, whether social or artistic, he managed also to live his own life entirely in his own way.

Either he had little or no sense of time, or he had a resolute mania for unpunctuality. He was always late for everything; or just simply wasn't there when he was expected to be there.

Once when I was staying at Malfitano the Whitakers gave a great dinner to the high and mighty of Palermo. We all had to go to the dining-room without the host, whose empty chair stood between two Sicilian princesses. Only when dinner was nearly over did Mr. Whitaker materialize mysteriously. He just seemed suddenly to be there, and glided into his seat murmuring sounds that suggested faint apology mingled with welcome.

Another time, when I had tea with the Whitakers at the Grand Hotel in Rome, I was leaving about six in the evening with the younger daughter, who was going out, and we were in the corridor outside the door of Mr. Whitaker s bedroom when it was opened and his valet came out carrying a tray, on which were the remains of a meal. (I remember a plate with chicken bones on it.) Miss Whitaker glanced at it casually.

"Papa's just finished lunch!" she remarked, and we walked on together.

Once when I was staying at Malfitano Mr. Hamilton Aïdé, and Mr. Alexander Yorke, who had been for years groom-in-waiting at the English Court, were also guests in the house. At dinner one night, after the servants had all left the room, a debate arose about servants and lasted for some time, various opinions being put forward about their mentality, their unexpected and unpredictable way of looking at things, their odd likes and dislikes, the rigidity of etiquette in the servants' hall and so forth. During this Mr. Yorke did not utter a word. At last someone turned to him and said,

"And what do you think about servants, Mr. Yorke?"

"Oh, you mustn't put that question to me," he replied solemnly. "I'm not qualified to answer it."

"Why not?" somebody asked.

"I've been a servant all my life."

During my first year in Rome, wishing to gather material for the book which I afterwards brought out as *The Fruitful Vine*, I went incessantly into society, besides visiting nearly everything that was interesting in the glorious city which I learned to love. I went several times to the Vatican, and heard the Pope deliver a long speech in Italian to the many pilgrims among whom I stood, and kissed his ring. And I made many expeditions by motor into the wonderfully beautiful

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scenery in the midst of which Rome is set. When the heat of summer became overwhelming I moved to Naples. I paid several visits to Rapallo and Porto Fino, and often met the great German playwright and novelist, Herr Hauptmann, taking his daily constitutional alone by the sea on the highway which lies between them.

When the autumn came I went back to the Hôtel Windsor for my second long spell of Roman life.

During this I lived as a rule quietly and worked very hard on my book, which was long and difficult.

When the following Lent came, E. F. Benson's brother, Father Hugh Benson, who had become a priest of the Roman Church, arrived in Rome to deliver a course of sermons in the Church of San Silvestro. I had met him at Lambeth, and before his course began he called on me at my hotel and one afternoon came to tea with me. He was quite unlike "E. F.", though he was also a popular novelist as well as a priest, but, like all the Bensons, he was exceedingly clever and splendid company. We had a long talk about literature and psychology, and finally the conversation turned to the subject of occultism, and I found that Father Benson was evidently fascinated, like the late Lord Halifax, by the subject of apparitions of the departed, and was a firm believer in ghosts. He had several times stayed in haunted houses, and on one occasion had, with two friends, spent a night sitting up in an old English mansion whose owners eventually were forced to raze it to the ground in consequence of the impossibility of living in it owing to the visitations of what they always called "Elementals." Father Benson believed absolutely in these, and also in so-called "possessions" by devils, and naturally enough quoted to me that passage in the Bible which relates the casting out of devils by Christ. He told me that more than once, in his career as a priest, he had met unfortunate people who, in his opinion, were so possessed, and were forced to do evil even in defiance of their own wills and desires. When he was leaving me he asked me, but rather diffidently, if I should find any time to come to San Silvestro to hear him preach.

I said I was coming and was greatly looking forward to it. We parted after two hours of talk that were delightful to me.

A few days afterwards I went to San Silvestro and found it filled to the doors by a crowd that had come to hear Father Benson.

I must now confess that I was simply amazed by his performance in the pulpit.

In social intercourse I had found him an entirely unaffected and, though so clever and original, very straightforward and simple man. By this I mean a man completely simple in manner, though no doubt subtle in mind.

In the pulpit, however, he was, I thought, startlingly sensational. His changes of voice were so abrupt as to be almost alarming. But

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even more surprising were his movements of body. Sometimes he would suddenly lower his voice and simultaneously shrink down in the pulpit until only his head and face were visible to the congregation. Then he would raise his voice almost to a shriek and, like a figure in a Punch and Judy show, dart up diagonally and lean over the pulpit edge until one almost feared that he would tumble out of it and land sprawling among his fascinated, yet apprehensive hearers below.

I have in my time heard a good many preachers, both English and foreign, including Father Bernard Vaughan and Mr. Haweis, both in their different ways sensational. But Father Benson surpassed them all in exaggerated emotionalism of manner and voice. His matter was interesting and his fervour was obvious. But he almost stupefied me on that occasion. He seemed an entirely different man from the charming and unaffected visitor with whom I had conversed a few days before. I have heard him called dramatic. I thought him melodramatic.

When the long sermon was over I came out of the church in a condition of mental confusion which led me to do something I greatly regretted.

At the door of the church I was met by a priest who held out his hand to me and said in a cordial voice,

"So you are in Rome, Robert Hichens!"

I took the hand, looked into the strong intellectual face and said, "Father Maturin! I had no idea you were in Rome too!"

The expression on the face changed. An expression of, I thought, almost indignant astonishment came into it.

"Well, really!" the priest said. "After all our meetings in Broadway I thought you would at least know who I am!"

I pulled myself together, made a fierce mental effort, called on my subconscious and mercifully received an answer.

"Abbot Gasquet!" I exclaimed. "Of course I know you! The truth is that dear Father Benson's pulpit manner has had such an overwhelming effect upon me that I scarcely know where I am. Do forgive me!"

"Of course I will!" he said, smiling. "Father Benson is rather unexpected. So you thought I was Father Maturin, did you?"

"Yes—for a moment, though you are not a bit like him."

"Well, I might be like a worse man than that," he rejoined.

And we walked away together.

Subsequently Abbot Gasquet received a Cardinal's hat.

When my book, which was eventually published by Mr. Fisher Unwin, and was also translated into Italian, came out, I had given up living in Rome. But my deep affection for it has never ceased. I know a good many cities, including, besides London, Paris, Stockholm, Munich, Naples, Palermo, Milan, Athens, Constantinople, Damascus,

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Jerusalem, Cairo, Alexandria, Copenhagen, Marseilles, Beyrouth, Vienna, Budapest, Venice, and others, but I have never loved any city so much as I grew to love Rome. And I simply can't understand how anyone can be disappointed by Rome. Yet some people have been —including Monsieur André Gide.

Rome! Shall I ever see Rome again?

XI

An author may think himself very fortunate if one of his books obtains a really great success and appeals to a vast multitude of readers, and my success with *The Garden of Allah* encouraged me very much. But it caused me some anxiety too, especially when I realized that I could make nothing of a book about the peasants of Sicily. Although in Rome I was gradually gathering material for the book I eventually wrote, I wanted meanwhile to work on something that I could publish within a year or two. By this time I had acquired such a habit of sitting down at my writing-table every morning immediately after an early breakfast that it seemed unnatural to me not to have something definite in hand. Concentrating on a new book seems to give one a sort of double life and I felt lopsided without it.

Though I could not write a peasant book about Sicily I wanted to use my Sicilian knowledge and my love for the beautiful island in some way, and after a painful time of hesitation and impotence a new idea for a Sicilian book came to me and I began to write *The Call of the Blood*, which was published in 1906, and was very successful, and was bought for a film. Before it I brought out a volume of stories with the name *The Black Spaniel*.

My two summers spent partly in Naples enabled me to write, as a sequel to *The Call of the Blood*, *A Spirit in Prison*, the book which George Moore rightly said had "really too many sunsets" in it. Then came *The Spell of Egypt* in 1908, *Barbary Sheep* in 1909, *Bella Donna* in the same year, *The Holy Land* in 1910, *The Dweller on the Threshold* (eventually published in French as *Son Double*) in 1911, and finally my Roman book, *The Fruitful Vine*, also in 1911. All of these had success, but especially *Barbary Sheep*, a short book which I sold twice for films, and *Bella Donna*, which became one of the greatest selling successes I ever had.

After I gave up journalism entirely and devoted my time to the

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writing of short stories and novels, with an occasional play, I lived a great deal abroad. Every year until the war of 1914 broke out I visited Sicily, and from there I made the journeys which enabled me to write my three books of travel. But I often paid visits to London and sometimes stayed in the country. In London I had met Maude Valérie White, the composer, at the house of Mr. Arthur Chappell and his niece Miss Minnie Chappell. This was an important event in my life.

I had, of course, often seen Miss White on the concert platform when she was accompanying her songs at the Monday and Saturday "Pops" and elsewhere. But I was introduced to her by Miss Minnie Chappell.

"Maude," as nearly everyone called her, really was a phenomenon. I never met anyone who in any way resembled her. She had very bad health, though she lived to a great age, but her spirit was unconquerable and her vitality was astounding. She was not merely gifted—she won the Mendelssohn scholarship at the Academy of Music, and Santley introduced her first songs to the world when she was only a girl—but she was exceptionally clever, extraordinarily humorous and amusing, a linguist, an omnivorous reader, and one of the most entertaining talkers in London or anywhere else. She was also great-hearted, impulsive, enthusiastic, impetuous, and beneath it all deeply religious. I forget exactly how many languages she knew. But she talked fluent French and German and Italian, knew a great deal of Spanish—she had spent much time in South America—translated a book from Swedish into English, had studied Russian, and may, for all I know, have been quite at home in Esquimaux. She was an ardent Roman Catholic but never thrust her beliefs upon other people.

As a pianist she was brilliant: she played the music of Chopin quite exceptionally well.

And she was a great "character."

At our first meeting she played to me for a couple of hours until I was almost dazed by her orchestral energy and the multifarious character of her powers. For she played exciting excerpts from a Roumanian opera she was composing, which, alas, was never given on the stage.

Although she was often in London she had a delicious little country house in Broadway, Worcestershire, and very soon she asked me to stay there. Needless to say, I accepted. And in Broadway began my happy association with her and her intimate friends, the de Navarros, whose house was then next door to hers, and was eventually, when she gave it up, incorporated with theirs.

Madame de Navarro had been long known to all the world as Mary Anderson, the beautiful American actress, who after a triumph-

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ant career on the stage in America and England left it on her marriage to Antonio de Navarro, at the age of only twenty-nine, and settled down happily to life in the English country. My meeting with her led eventually to a close association in work, for owing to her urging enthusiasm I was persuaded later on to undertake an enterprise which I should never have attempted but for her, the adaptation of my novel *The Garden of Allah* for the American stage.

The beauty of Broadway so fascinated me that I repeated my visit there several times and passed part of my summer, and eventually one whole winter, in houses I rented there.

Madame de Navarro and her subtle, super-subtle, and accomplished husband, were ardent Catholics, and the subject of *The Garden of Allah*, partly on that account, greatly appealed to her. She read it and told me one day that a great drama could be drawn from it and would have success on the stage. I doubted this and at first said I couldn't "see it" as a play. But she was so persistent in her belief that she was right about the matter and I was wrong, that at last one day I said to her:

"If you will collaborate with me I will try to write a drama drawn from the book."

"Done!" she exclaimed. "Shake!"

After that there was no going back. I rented Lady Maude Bowes-Lyon's house next door but one to the Navarros' Court Farm, and we settled down to a spell of hard, but enjoyable work, which at last resulted in the play that was produced finally at the New Century Theatre in New York, and at long last was presented to the British public at the National Theatre, Drury Lane, in London.

Madame de Navarro, always "Mrs. Tony" to me, was a delightful collaborator. Her enthusiasm was infectious and her knowledge of the stage was a great help to me. Our work went forward, sometimes in her house, sometimes in the house I rented, with happy smoothness. But I must confess that often I felt a secret distrust of the play that was growing and doubted whether it could ever be a success. While I had been writing the book I had not felt this distrust, but had had a feeling of safety. This was now lacking in me, but not in Mrs. Tony. She revelled in working on the play.

I said to her, "If you will return to the stage and play Domini we *shall* have a success. Will you do it?"

She said neither "yes" nor "no." I felt that she longed to create the part, but also that she dreaded a return to the stage.

"Let's leave it!" I said. "You can decide when the play is finished —and accepted."

After a pause I added, "If it ever is!"

"Oh, it will be! Don't fear!" she said.

I may as well state here that I have always had my doubts about

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adaptation. One conceives a subject, and works it out in book form to the best of one's ability. Then one tries to turn it into an entirely different type of thing—a drama. Something inartistic in such an effort. And yet in my case the chief successes I have had in connection with the stage, with one exception, have been gained with plays drawn from novels. *Becky Sharp* was very successful. *The Garden of Allah* drew an immense amount of money. And Bernard Fagan's drama, founded on my book *Bella Donna*, which contained a great deal of dialogue "lifted" from the novel, was also a big money-maker.

One other play, with which, of course, I had nothing to do, which, drawn from a story, turned out brilliantly as a play, was the adaptation of Somerset Maugham's masterpiece *Rain*. He, although a successful playwright, never thought of it as a play, but he allowed two young men to adapt it for the stage, and the result, I thought, was a triumph. I went to see it in London three times in one week, and have never been able to forget it.

I have only written for the stage occasionally. On the whole, the financial result has been decidedly satisfactory to me, though my successes have been mingled with failures. And I have had some peculiar and disconcerting experiences in connection with the theatre.

After my first success with *The Green Carnation* I was approached by the managers of a big London theatre, who asked me to collaborate with a Mr. Wignell. He had submitted to them in skeleton form two dramas which they liked, but felt unequal to the writing of the dialogue. Would I undertake to write it? If so, they would pay me a sum down at once and draw up a contract which would be to my advantage.

I asked, of course, to have a look at the skeletons before giving an answer.

They introduced me to Mr. Wignell, who had already, I think, written a play for Wilson Barrett. He showed me his outlines of the two plays, and I accepted the offer and wrote both the plays from his plots. Neither of them was ever produced. But one, called *The Wife of a Genius*, came so near to production that it was advertised on the omnibuses of London. Yet it never saw the footlights. The managers accepted it. We rehearsed it at the Shaftesbury Theatre. It promised, I thought, very well. But there was one horrible drawback. The actor, Lewis Waller, who had the principal man's part, was determined to have a certain actress to play the heroine's part opposite to him. The managers were willing to engage her. But I considered her entirely unsuited to the rôle, which was a very big one. And I was so positive that the play would fail if she was in it that I went so far as to say that if the rôle was allotted to her I would have nothing more to do with the venture. We rehearsed for some time with a stopgap while the struggle about the heroine was going

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on, but eventually matters became so strained, and Mr. Waller, a very clever and popular actor, was so upset by the whole thing, that the production of our play was abandoned.

I have written, either alone or in collaboration, several plays that have never been performed. One was founded on my book *The Woman with the Fan*. I collaborated on this with the Honourable Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton, who was not only very clever but had, I think, a strong dramatic sense.

But it was never accepted—I believe because no leading actress was willing to play the part of a beautiful woman who lost her beauty in a motor accident. We wanted Miss Irene Vanbrugh to act in it. I still believe that play might have had a success if brilliantly acted.

My theatrical ups and downs have been rather confusing.

My play *The Real Woman*, produced by Miss Evelyn Millard with a very fine cast at the Criterion Theatre in the depth of a hard winter, was a failure. I wrote two plays which were produced by Mr. Anthony Prinsep at the Globe Theatre. The first one, *Press the Button*, a farce, failed completely; the second, a drama called *The Voice from the Minaret*, was very successful.

I have often wondered since that success why I did not go on steadily writing for the stage. But I didn't. Novel-writing absorbed most of my working hours. Nevertheless I did manage to write a one-act drama, called *The Law of the Sands*, for Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who acted it with success at the London Coliseum and in the big provincial cities. And when I was living in Egypt a long time afterwards I wrote four full-length plays which are now peacefully reposing in the seclusion of shut drawers. And I wrote a play in collaboration with my Swiss friend, the novelist John Knittel, which we sold three times, once to Mr. H. B. Irving, but which was never produced.

Disappointments? Yes. Nevertheless I have made a lot of money with the few successes I have had on the stage.

Much the greatest money-maker of these was, of course, *The Garden of Allah*.

Before Madame de Navarro and I finished it there was already some talk of its being taken first for America. But when it was finished we decided to show it to a very handsome young actor with a splendid voice, who, we thought, would be the best man we could find to play the part of the Trappist Monk. This actor was Henry Ainley.

Well, this is what happened. I asked Ainley to read the play and to tell me exactly what he thought of it. He gladly agreed and I sent it to him. After a short time he telephoned to say he had carefully read it and would like to give me his opinion. I invited him to lunch alone with me in the Carlton Restaurant on a certain day, and he came, bringing the manuscript, and gave it to me. Then we went in to lunch.

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"Now do tell me what you think," I said.

"May I be perfectly frank?" he asked.

"Of course."

"Then," said he, "I'm sorry to disappoint you, but there is not one penny in this play of yours—not one single penny!"

He said this with great emphasis and the manner of one whose decision is final.

"I'm sorry," I said. "You may be right."

"I'm quite positive about it," he said.

"Then let's drop the subject," I said calmly. "No need to argue the matter. I asked your candid opinion and you were quite right to give it."

He looked slightly uncomfortable, but nevertheless we ate an excellent lunch and parted good friends.

I was not discouraged. In my life I had already known a good many predictions to be afterwards completely falsified by facts.

When I told Madame de Navarro what had happened she said Ainley had lost one of the biggest acting chances of his life.

We then, I believe, showed it to Lewis Waller, who eventually played the Monk at the beginning of the run in America.

Miss Elizabeth Marbury was at that time the most prominent agent for plays in America. We put our play into her hands, and an offer to produce it came from George Tyler, an impresario who was "backed" by a financial company. A contract was arranged and I travelled to Biskra, where I met Mr. Tyler and Mr. Ford, his producer. I read the play to them both in the garden of Comte Landon at the edge of the desert. They were enthusiastic, more enthusiastic really than I was. For I still had grave doubts about the play.

Sketches of the scenery round about Biskra were made, and we went out into the Sahara so that my companions might "absorb" some of the atmosphere.

Mr. Tyler told me his company meant to acquire the New Century Theatre in New York and produce the play there. This was the theatre built by the millionaires as a sort of national theatre for Americans.' Although it was opened by Miss Julia Marlow and Mr. Edward Sothern, both enormously popular with American audiences, it was a failure, and at this time was shut up. I knew very little about it, except that it was ultra-modern and large.

"We'll give them the most wonderful production that's ever been seen!" said Mr. Tyler.

I sincerely hoped they would.

I returned to England and they went back to America. It was understood that I was to go to America and be at all the rehearsals of the play. Mr. Tyler agreed to engage Lewis Waller to play the Monk. The other artists would be found in America. I went home resolved

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to persuade Madame de Navarro to come out with me to New York. She was still enshrined in the hearts of Americans and was called "Our Mary" all over the States.

She told me she couldn't go. I begged and implored. I told her that her arrival in America after her very long stay in England would cause a sensation and be good for the play. Wouldn't she play Domini? No, she couldn't. She had lived for so many years in the peace and seclusion of the country that she simply couldn't face the turmoil and the glaring publicity of America.

Then I must go alone?

She was terribly sorry, but—yes, I must.

And I sailed without her, but with Lewis Waller on board. And I faced the music alone.

But a lovely surprise was in store for me. A few days after reaching New York I got a cable to say that Madame de Navarro was coming to America with her husband and would arrive on a certain date. She had been persuaded to this, I discovered afterwards, by my good friend Sir Squire Bancroft, who told her that she *must* do her best for the play, that her presence and help in America might make all the difference between failure and success on account of her still immense popularity over there, that it was absolutely her duty to stand by me in a matter so important to both of us. So—she came, was seen once more and conquered all hearts. Even the hard-boiled newspaper men were at her feet.

But before her arrival I had to go through a good deal that wasn't very agreeable to me. Many people would probably have enjoyed it. I didn't.

Unfortunately I had then, and still have, an almost stupid dislike of personal publicity. Like everyone, I enjoy success. But I don't enjoy being used personally as an intended help towards that success.

Mr. George Tyler and his backers were risking an immense sum of money on our play, and they didn't mean to lose it if by any means they could prevent the loss. They had therefore heralded my coming to New York in all the principal newspapers of the country. Directly I arrived I was swallowed up by glaring publicity. While I was still on the steamer out at sea—as I supposed—I was confronted by journalists. When I disembarked I was greeted, and taken possession of, by a publicity agent. On reaching my hotel, the Saint Regis, I was told that I was going to "receive the Press" within a couple of hours. And within a couple of hours my sitting-room was full of strangers, who sat around me, taking notes of my appearance, voice and mannerisms, and writing down such words as fell from my lips in reply to questions.

Enough of that! I believe I got through it not too badly. At any rate, late in the evening, when at last I was alone and almost ready for

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bed, there was a ring at my door, and a young man who had been in the throng of journalists, Mr. Carl Van Vechten, since extremely well known as a clever critic and original novelist, came to have a private interview with me, and informed me that I had managed things that afternoon in a manner that was "swell." We became friends on that evening; when I left America for England he came to see me off on the boat, and I parted from him with genuine regret. He was clever, kind, interesting and very sympathetic. We still write to each other now and then.

My first visit to the New Century Theatre discouraged me. It was a splendid temple of art with a magnificent stage, but it was, I thought, far too large for our play. How could we "get it across"? How could any dramatic effect be thoroughly brought off in such an enormous interior? Afterwards, when Mrs. Patrick Campbell was questioning me in London about my American experiences, and I was telling her about the New Century Theatre, she said:

"I know! I know! In such a theatre, on such a stage, all the actors and actresses look like performing fleas!"

Mr. Tyler was very proud of having secured this vast theatre for our play and expected me to be enchanted with it. But I could not help saying,

"It's surely much too large for us!"

"Not for the audiences we shall have!" he replied. "Don't you want to make money over here?"

I did naturally. But I feared for the play.

Before Madame de Navarro and her husband arrived, travelling on the same ship as a great friend of mine, Countess Bubna, the daughter of Mary Duchess of Sutherland by her first marriage, another thing happened to alarm me. One night Mr. Tyler came to me and said,

"Please come to the theatre. I want to show you the Sahara desert. They've just set it."

We got into a taxicab and were soon on the other side of Central Park.

He took me behind the scenes and presently led me to the enormous stage.

"There it is!" he said triumphantly.

I gazed and saw a vast extent of vagueness, broken by a number of objects that looked to me like gigantic meringues. The stage was lit very faintly. I looked around for two or three minutes, not knowing what to say.

"Well?" he exclaimed.

"Is *that* the Sahara?" I murmured.

For an instant he looked disconcerted. Then, recovering himself, he said, "Come into the auditorium. Sit a little way back and I'll have the scene lit for you."

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I obeyed, found a seat in the stalls and sat down there alone.

Almost directly Mr. Ford, the producer, appeared on the stage, shouted out some directions and then vanished.

Two or three minutes passed, something mysterious happened in hidden places, the scene was gradually flooded with light, and lo! there was the desert stretching before me. A pause! Another shout, this time behind the scenes; the light gradually faded, night seemed to fall on the desert. I looked upwards and saw the firmament, a deep, fathomless, blue sky, studded with stars that seemed to hang in it; among them the Great Bear and the Milky Way.

It was magical. I had never before seen such a perfect representation of a cloudless African night sky on the stage. While I looked, another change. Night faded gradually into a perfect representation of the strangely cold and mysterious coming of dawn.

I was able to congratulate Mr. Tyler from my heart.

"It seemed like a miracle," I said.

"Wait till you see the garden," he said. "We have brought palm trees from Florida for you."

By "the garden" he meant, of course, Comte Landon's wonderful garden at the edge of the desert in Biskra. Since my book came out this has been absurdly labelled the Garden of Allah, whereas that is the name sometimes applied by the Arabs to the whole desert of Sahara.

I realized that night why Mr. Tyler and his backers had engaged the enormous New Century Theatre. They meant to concentrate on "production," and to use our play as a vehicle for one of the most sensational scenic productions ever seen in America. This made me rather uneasy, more especially as two or three of the cast engaged by Mr. Tyler before I arrived in America would never have been engaged if I had had a free hand. My fears about this were fully shared by Madame de Navarro when she came to rehearsals. But it was too late to interfere. All we could do was to try to make the best of the material provided for us. And this we did, but not without suffering. What we longed for was a perfect acting performance of the play. What we eventually got was a very remarkable, and in some respects astonishing, scenic production, through which trickled a stream of not entirely satisfactory acting.

I may as well state now that I never considered our *Garden of Allah* at all a first-rate play. As a drama it did not satisfy me. But I did feel it contained something, a core of drama, which might bring it to success. There was in it something which, if it did not satisfy a critical intellect, might reach and move the heart. Madame de Navarro liked our play much better than I ever did. But it stirred to the depths her strongly Catholic soul. When I was writing the book it had stirred my soul, though I was not a Catholic. Seen and

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heard on the stage, at moments it moved me, especially in the scene of the Monk's confession, but taken altogether I was not entirely pleased with it, and during the long and sometimes very exhausting rehearsals—the final one lasted all day and nearly the whole of the night—I very often thought we were heading for a tremendous failure. I use the word "tremendous" because Mr. Tyler and his henchmen had worked up such a hurricane of publicity for us and the play that the noise of its failure would have resounded from one end of the States to the other.

I must say for Mr. Lewis Waller that, though he had no idea of the tortures which beset the monkish soul of Androvsky, his dramatic instinct served him well in the confession scene, when he had to deliver a tremendously long speech leading up to an almost fierce climax. In this he invariably "brought down the house." His lack of understanding of the inner meaning of his part was shown by a little incident which took place at the Navarros' house in Broadway.

He came there to stay with the Navarros before starting for America, and read his part to them both in their drawing-room. When he had finished he asked them what they thought of the way in which he had read it. Mr. de Navarro ventured to say that he thought the spirituality of the part had not been quite sufficiently indicated.

"Spirituality! Spirituality!" said Mr. Waller. "What d'you mean by that? Ghosts?"

So much of my time was passed in the theatre during my stay in New York that very little was left for the pleasures of society. But I managed to meet, as well as a great many newspaper men, with all of whom except two I got on quite happily, a few interesting and cordial people: among them Miss Mary Garden, the great opera-singer and actress; John Drew, the actor; that famous man Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, ex-President of America; Harry Hollins of the Hollins Bank, who later took charge of my American money, and his charming wife; Mr. Johnson, eventually American Ambassador to Italy, at that time associate editor of the *Century Magazine*; Mrs. Frederick Vanderbilt, who kindly invited me to spend a week-end at her country place, which I think was on the Hudson river; Mrs. Benjamin Guinness and some others. I was put up for two or three of the best New York clubs, and the *Century Magazine* authorities very kindly gave a dinner in my honour, at which the dinner-table was elaborately decorated with—green carnations. When it was over, the editors of the *Century Magazine* asked me to call as soon as I could at the editorial offices, as they had a proposal to lay before me. I went, and they asked me to write for the magazine.

More about that later.

Mr. Theodore Roosevelt sent me an invitation to lunch with him and his adherents on a certain day at a club, or meeting-place, where

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they mustered once a week when he was in New York. He informed me that they had only one hour for lunch and had to begin it at one o'clock precisely. Would I come?

Of course I accepted, and this is what happened.

Every day I had to rehearse at the theatre, and when the luncheon day came I was detained unexpectedly by something connected with the play, and arrived at the rendezvous five minutes late.

I was shown into a large room, nearly filled by a very long table round which were sitting thirty American men, all of whom were strangers to me. At the top of the table, fortunately near the door by which I came in, was the ex-President, holding in his hand a tumbler of milk.

He got up on seeing me, and all the men in the room stood up too. Then he shook me warmly by the hand, greeted me, apologized for having begun lunch without me, and said,

"Now let me introduce my friends to you."

He then gave me the names in turn of every man in the room, beginning with the man on his right sitting next the chair I was to occupy, and making the circle of the room till he ended up with the man who sat on his left hand. I had to bow and murmur a greeting twenty-nine times in succession, and the twenty-nine men bowed and murmured to me.

Then I sank into my chair on the ex-President's right, and had a long and interesting talk with him while I swallowed my luncheon.

No alcohol was served at it. And it was delightfully informal.

I remember that Mr. Roosevelt talked to me a great deal about Russian literature, in which I have been during most of my life deeply interested.

He seemed full of ardent life and good spirits and was very easy to get on with. Towards the end of lunch the conversation, in which the men near us took part, got, I forget why, on the subject of people who wouldn't be missed if they departed from this life. Mr. Roosevelt knew I had lived for a good while in Rome, where I had met his wife and his youngest daughter, and found out that I had met also, and become acquainted with, most of the diplomats accredited to Italy, including two American Ambassadors.

"Ha!" he said, looking first at me and then round the table at his adherents. "Among those who wouldn't be missed if they—shall we say passed over?—yes, passed over, I know one Ambassador!"

There was a roar of laughter, in which he joined.

Needless to say, only one of the Ambassadors I had met had been appointed by him.

That was the only occasion on which I was with ex-President Roosevelt. I was rather surprised by his appearance. He looked to me like an absolutely out-of-doors man, a vital, sporting, pugnacious,

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go-ahead man, who would be more at home riding over a prairie on a spirited horse, gun at his side, than in a council chamber or in any drawing-room. Obviously he was crammed full of will and had first-rate brains. And, also obviously, he was born to rule—some set of human beings. I could imagine him a born King of cowboys, worshipped by the most masculine type of men. Mr. Arthur Balfour looked far more like a statesman than the ex-President did—to me. I parted from him that day in a street of New York. He was clad in rather rough serviceable clothes, and wore a hat with an unusually broad brim, which had, it seemed to me, a touch of the Wild West in its amplitude.

A big man: a remarkable man: capable certainly, if in power, of getting rid of one, or even one dozen, unwanted Ambassadors. When he snapped his strong teeth together he looked almost carnivorous.

Miss Mary Garden, another very strong personality, I met at an afternoon reception given by Carl Van Vechten and his attractive and youthful wife. Unfortunately, on that day she sported a fashionable veil, with a pattern so intricate that it almost concealed her very good-looking face. We had a long talk, and I noted her natural exuberance and felt a strong wish to know her much better.

I had already seen and heard her three times on the stage in Paris, in her lovely and strange performance as Mélisande in Debussy's opera *Pelléas and Mélisande*, founded on Maeterlinck's play. She had quite unusual talent as an actress apart from her great gift as a singer. Besides Mélisande I saw and heard her in only one other part before her retirement from the operatic stage. Happening to be in Paris, I took up a newspaper and saw that she was going to sing the rôle of La Traviata at a matinée at the Opéra Comique. Of course I bought a stall, and one close to the stage. I don't know exactly why, but I had never imagined Miss Garden in such a singing rôle, associated with such people as Patti, Albani, Sembrich, Tetrazzini and Toti dal Monte.

Well, she gave an astonishing performance, both in acting and singing. The first act was intensely feverish, suggesting, as it were, consumption on the way. The scene with the father of her lover was wonderfully moving. And the death scene crowned the best acting combined with singing performance I have seen of that part on the operatic stage. I have heard the rôle more wonderfully sung by several stars of the opera, but as a complete singing-with-acting rendering of a well-known rôle I have scarcely seen its equal.

Later on I saw more of Miss Garden in Europe, though not by any means enough. And I had the great pleasure of being asked to dinner by her when we were both at St. Moritz. She told me that she found it far easier to memorize ultra-modern music than, for instance, the

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music of such composers as Verdi and Bizet. This astonished me. She also told me the extraordinary story of her début in opera in Paris, where she sang for the first time the part of Louise, in the opera of that name, without having ever rehearsed it with orchestra. She had studied and mastered the part for her own pleasure, and was at the Opéra Comique one night when, just before the curtain rose, the singer engaged for Louise was suddenly taken ill. One of the managers of the opera-house happened to know that Miss Garden, then unknown to fame, had studied the rôle, sent for her in haste and said,

"Could you possibly sing Louise without any rehearsal?"

"Surely!" was the calm reply.

She dressed, made up quickly, and sang and acted the part from beginning to end with complete self-possession.

"Weren't you horribly nervous?" I asked her.

"Not a bit," she replied. "I just loved it."

In a night she was famous, and she never looked back.

At last the fateful day came for the first performance of our *Garden of Allah*, and, to our horror, Mr. Tyler informed us that it would take place in the afternoon, and that it would be given for the second time in the evening of the same day. As it was a very long play, with many changes of scenery, and as the final rehearsals had all of them lasted for from four to five hours, or even much more, we thought this a wild scheme. But Mr. Tyler was determined and we had to give in to his obstinacy. We decided, however, that we couldn't face the matinée, and we spent the whole afternoon with friends at the Colony Club, receiving reports by telephone from time to time to tell us how things were going.

We were both, I think, rather nervous, but we had sympathetic American friends with us who kept us all the time in lively, perhaps even hectic, conversation. The news seemed good. We heard of Mr. Waller being called before the curtain countless times after the confession scene, and finally we separated, Madame de Navarro going to the house of the friend with whom she was staying, and I to my hotel, hoping that the worst was over, and agreeing to meet in our box at the evening performance, if the actors and actresses were still alive then.

When I reached my rooms I was presently visited there by Irene Bubna, who had come straight from the matinée.

Irene was a woman who, as it is called, "spoke her mind."

"Tell me honestly how it went!" I adjured her, after telephoning for tea. "Is it a success?"

"I don't know," she replied. "It may be, or not. I can't tell."

A cold shiver went down my back.

"Why not? Wasn't it well received?"

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"Yes. But, for one thing, the sandstorm went all over the people who were sitting in the stalls."

"Good heavens! Why?" I exclaimed.

"Something went wrong with the machinery. Another thing!"

"What? What thing?"

"The animals!"

"Did they do anything wrong?"

"Well—yes!" she replied grimly.

I didn't ask for particulars. I preferred to remain in doubt and to give free rein to my morbid imagination. After a little more of this delightful conversation I said,

"Never mind! Here's tea! Madame de Navarro and I shall be there tonight and we'll judge for ourselves."

We did judge for ourselves. The great house was crammed to the doors and George Tyler was there. After the confession scene we went out into the corridor at the back of our box and met him. His face wore the smile of a seraph, or at any rate what is popularly supposed to be the smile of a seraph.

"The sandstorm!" we exclaimed.

"That's all right!" he answered. "Tomorrow night a troop of page-boys in livery will go through the stalls with brushes, and every stall-holder who needs it will be carefully brushed."

"Then did you do it on purpose?"

"No. But it's a first-rate stunt. Every paper in New York will be writing about it tomorrow. And the public will rush to get covered with sand from the Sahara."

"But their clothes!" we exclaimed.

"It won't do any real damage. We'll quiet it down quite a bit. And let me tell you two something. Between you, you'll get fifty thousand pounds out of this play."

He didn't say pounds, but gave the equivalent in dollars and I worked it out in my head.

Well, he wasn't far wrong. The play turned out to be a great financial success, and after a capital run in New York went to all the American cities and broke records everywhere. In Chicago especially the attendance was enormous, and for several weeks people were turned away for lack of room every time it was given.

Directly the piece was launched I was forced to leave America and go back to London to be present at the rehearsals of Bernard Fagan's play drawn from my book *Bella Donna*, which George Alexander was to produce at the St. James's Theatre, with Mrs. Patrick Campbell and himself in the principal parts. The de Navarros and Countess Bubna accompanied me, and luckily we had a good voyage. Both Madame de Navarro and I were exhausted, and were thankful to rest most of the time in deck-chairs drinking in the sea air.

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Only one thing of any note happened during the voyage. That was my introduction to the marvellously clever Miss Ruth Draper, who was *en route* to London to appear there for the first time in her extraordinary one-woman-and-no-scenery performance. Madame de Navarro knew her, and one afternoon sent me by Tony de Navarro an invitation to come to her stateroom "for a surprise."

I went, met Miss Draper for the first time, though I had seen her on board, and witnessed some items from her répertoire. They were astonishing. I realized at once that she was sure of success in London. She had an uncanny power of giving you an impression that you actually saw the invisible beings she, by a few gestures and some dialogue, was suggesting to you. Not only that. Two or three times I felt as if I saw invisible furniture when, for instance, one of her characters was supposed to be standing and talking to another character supposed to be sitting in an armchair. Later on I met her in Switzerland, and once sat next to her at a lunch-party given by the Ernest Schellings in their beautiful home at Nyon. Miss Draper is not only greatly talented but very generous and kind-hearted. She once helped a distinguished woman friend of mine who was overtaken by financial trouble, and did it with exquisite tact.

We landed at Liverpool on a damp gloomy day. Nobody whom we knew was on the quay to greet us. And Madame de Navarro laughingly said to me,

"Well, Roberto, our brief glory has departed. Here we are nobodies!"

"Very salutary for us!" I said gaily. "So restful!"

And we made for the Pullman car.

XII

Before I left New York I had considered and accepted an interesting offer which was made to me by the *Century Magazine* shortly after the dinner of the Green Carnations which they had so kindly and amusingly given me. The editors of this magazine asked me if I would undertake to write for them a long series of articles which, after appearing in the *Century*, would be published by them in volume form with illustrations in colour of the places they wished me to visit in order to get my material. The first series of articles was to be dedicated to a description of the marvels of Egypt; the second to a description of Syria and the Holy Land; the third to the Near East, including Budapest, Constantinople and the Bosphorus, Greece and

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Dalmatia. They would like me to go fairly soon to Egypt and write a volume on that country first. When they knew about what time I could start they would arrange with a painter whom they knew, and whose work they admired, to visit Egypt and paint a series of pictures to be issued with my articles. The first volume of a series of three would deal only with Egypt, the second would have Palestine and Syria as its subjects, and the third the Near East.

As I am very fond of travel and the terms offered were good I had little hesitation in accepting this offer, and the result was that eventually I wrote for the *Century* three books: *Egypt and its Monuments*, subsequently called in a popular edition *The Spell of Egypt*; *The Holy Land*; and *The Near East*. These were all illustrated in colour by Mr. Jules Guerin.

However, before I tackled any part of this new job I had plenty to do in England, and directly I arrived in London I prepared to face the redoubtable actress and wit who had for so long pretended that I always "cut" her when we happened to meet, whereas the contrary was the truth.

I received a call to present myself at the St. James's Theatre as soon as possible for the morning rehearsals of Fagan's play drawn from my book *Bella Donna*. Luckily the sea voyage from America had lessened my fatigue after the hurricane of New York, and I took a cab to the theatre prepared for the worst and quite determined to "stand up to" Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Her reputation as an artist was very high; she had an immense following among British theatre-goers; Society with a capital S adored her; but she was said to be a devil at rehearsal. And the theatrical profession's name for her, I had been told, was "the Queen of Snobs."

When I entered the theatre and went "behind" I was amazed at the businesslike calm that prevailed. The chaos of the New Century Theatre was replaced by an almost solemn, and extremely gentleman-like atmosphere, that approached even, I thought, to the aristocratic. My old friend, Mr. Hamilton Aïdé, would have approved of it.

Sir George Alexander welcomed me and congratulated me on my success in America, news of which had, of course, reached London. Then we went at once to the stage, where the company was assembled. Among them was a tiny dog of the griffon persuasion, with prominent eyes, a domed head and a somewhat acid expression. This was reposing critically on the arm of Mrs. Patrick Campbell as on a seat of judgment, and seemed to me to be considering whether the actors were worthy to support the bright star it was owned by.

This was Georgina, whom I came to know very well.

Georgina came to all the rehearsals and was not exactly beloved by the company. But Mrs. Campbell would not be separated from her and Sir George was always polite to her.

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Bernard Fagan was there, and Miss Mary Grey, afterwards his wife, who had a part in the play.

When we came on to the stage I went up to Mrs. Campbell and said good-morning, and she made the conventional reply; then the rehearsal began.

At first Mrs. Campbell was coldly polite to me, but as time went on she began to thaw, and finally she gave way so completely that she bestowed on me the name of "Uncle Hitch," and never called me anything else to the end of our friendship. For we became very good friends, and though she, as I had expected, gave endless trouble at the rehearsals, and was exceedingly difficult in the theatre, she and I never fell out although I wasn't always on her side when there was trouble.

The fuss began with the rehearsal of the first act. She wanted it "written up" for her, and, though the play had been entirely devised by Fagan, insisted that I ought to do it. Fagan behaved very well and bore me no enmity for this, and I took the play home and expanded Mrs. Campbell's part in Act One. But when I read out what I had done at the following day's rehearsal, though Mrs. Campbell was satisfied Sir George was not. He said my dialogue was too much like Oscar Wilde's, and finally he told us that he had accepted the play as it was, that he was quite contented with it, and that no alteration was necessary.

"And now let's get on with the rehearsal!" he remarked.

Mrs. Campbell began to look rather like a thunderstorm, but she had to give in and we went ahead.

But the "offing" was cloudy and soon we were involved in bad weather.

The company had been engaged while I was away from England and I had had nothing to do with it, for the play was not mine, though its plot and much of its dialogue was. In the story there was the character of an Egyptian millionaire with whom Bella Donna, then married to Nigel Armine, a typical sporting Englishman, but with high ideals and a rather excessive belief in the good latent in human nature, fell madly in love while with her husband in Egypt. So madly in love did she fall that at the millionaire's suggestion she began slowly to poison her husband with sugar of lead while they were living on the Nile in a wonderful dahabeeyah which Nigel had rented for a time from the millionaire.

Sir George had engaged to play the Egyptian a well-known actor who had, he thought, a decidedly Oriental appearance.

Mrs. Campbell couldn't bear this actor, and the rehearsals of their love scenes together were disastrous. In the middle of one of them she said to me,

"*Do* something to him, can't you?"

"What?" I said. "What can I do?"

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"Try to change him."

"How?"

"Put a tarboosh on his head."

"Would you mind if I—" I began to the unfortunate actor.

"Oh no!" he said, but with very natural vexation. "Anything for the good of the play!"

I got a tarboosh and it was placed on his head.

"Good heavens! Now he looks like an icecream man!" cried Mrs. Campbell. "Take it off! Take it off!"

The tarboosh was removed, having somewhat disordered the actor's dark hair.

"Gracious goodness! Now he's just like a black-beetle!" from Mrs. Campbell.

As all this was said of a quite well-known actor, who had played leading parts in two poetic dramas produced in one of the finest London theatres, and who by many was considered very good-looking, his acute vexation can be understood, and when the rehearsal was over he complained to me about Mrs. Campbell's conduct.

"How is it possible to make passionate love to a woman who says one is like a black-beetle?" he said angrily.

I agreed that to do this would be decidedly difficult, and finally I went to Sir George with Mr. Fagan and said that the play would be wrecked unless a new Oriental lover was engaged. Mrs. Campbell could not be replaced. She was the ideal Bella Donna. But a different lover must be found.

"Find one, then!" Sir George said to me. "But I've signed an engagement for the run of the play with So-and-so. And he'll have to be paid. I can't pay the whole salary of two Eastern lovers."

Finally I agreed to pay half of So-and-so's salary each week and Sir George said he would be responsible for the rest. Fagan wasn't very well off at this time, so we left him out of the bargain. Mr. So-and-so departed from the cast. I made a round of the London theatres and found an actor with a splendid figure who was willing and able to come to us. Mrs. Campbell "passed" him as suitable and the rehearsals went forward again.

But we soon had another difficulty.

There was a setting in an Egyptian temple, and a magnificent white donkey had been provided upon which Mrs. Campbell was to ride away at the end of the scene.

When this noble animal was brought upon the stage Mrs. Campbell said, "What's that?"

"That is an Egyptian donkey, Mrs. Campbell," said Sir George.

"What's it for?"

"For you to ride away from the temple on."

"You expect *me* to ride on an ass?"

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"Of course! Everyone rides donkeys by the Nile."

"I am not everybody. I will never be seen by my public riding upon an ass. I'd rather throw up the part."

"May I remind you, Mrs. Campbell, that Christ rode on an ass?" observed Sir George.

But she wouldn't, and the donkey, like the first Oriental lover, was put out of the cast. Luckily I hadn't to pay half its salary for the run of the piece.

Mrs. Campbell had a mania for pulling things to pieces and changing them—usually for the worse. And when it came to the question of dresses poor Lady Alexander, who was considered an expert about clothes, had endless trouble with her. But at last the play was ready, and at the final dress rehearsal but one we had an audience of two people, the Princess Royal and her husband, the Duke of Fife. I was presented to both of them and they said they felt certain of the success of the play. They proved to be right. We had a wonderfully brilliant audience for the first night, and the play ran to crowded audiences for many months.

This was financially a prosperous period in my life, as money poured in from America as well as from the St. James's Theatre. And in addition I had just brought out my Roman novel *The Fruitful Vine*, for which I received in America on the day of publication the equivalent in dollars of four thousand pounds on account of royalties, as well as a large sum from my English publisher. This novel, by the way, had a curious fate. It pleased the English and sold extremely well in England, but it seemed to shock the Americans owing to its theme. It dealt with a childless wife whose husband longed to have children, and whose affections were alienated from her because she had none. She loves her husband, and in desperation at his continual visits to another woman, who has a family of charming little ones, she takes an Italian lover who gives her a child which the husband supposes to be his. This action and the tragedy that followed it seemed to disgust the Americans, and though my pictures of Roman life and Roman society were praised, the book in America was less successful than many of my other works.

After the first night of *Bella Donna* Mrs. Campbell and I went to a supper-party at the house of Lord and Lady Wemyss, where Mrs. Campbell was fêted, as she deserved to be. She amused the company, which included Lady (Arthur) Paget, the victim of the terrible lift accident which made her almost a cripple for life, by pretending that she hated the rôle of Bella Donna and was certain the public would think her an abominable woman because she played it so well. We all tried to reassure her, but she bemoaned her cruel fate, and said that nothing but the large salary she earned had induced her to play it.

"Even Uncle Hitch," she exclaimed, "is beginning to believe I'm

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a bad woman! What a curse it is to be poor! I should like to play nothing but Saints and they won't let me."

Soon after the play was produced Mrs. Campbell married George Cornwallis-West, the ex-husband of Lady Randolph Churchill. They lived in Mrs. Campbell's very pretty but very small house in Kensington Square, which I had often visited. One day, after the marriage, when Major Cornwallis-West was away from home, Mrs. Campbell asked me to lunch alone with her.

When lunch was over and we went upstairs she said, "Have you ever seen my bedroom?"

"Never," I said.

"Come alone and I'll show it to you."

And she conducted me into a room most of which was occupied by a very large bed over which was spread a lovely coverlet of old gold. While I was looking at it with admiration she stretched out her arm, pointed at it and exclaimed,

"There lies the battlefield!"

Eventually she left Kensington Square and took the house in Tedworth Square in which the lovely Lily Langtry, afterwards Lady de Bathe, had lived when she gave up her house in Pont Street. I had often been there when Mrs. Langtry had occupied it. Mrs. Campbell completely transformed it and turned it into a really beautiful home. The drawing-room especially was quite lovely and like no other drawing-room I had seen in London. She was, or seemed, very careless about money and very often complained to me about her lack of it.

I remember one day she told me that she was up to her eyes in debt and could hardly buy a new hat. About a week after this she telephoned, "Come to me if you can tomorrow afternoon about three. I shall have a surprise for you."

I went. When I got to Kensington Square I found a very smart motor-car drawn up before the door with a young chauffeur in livery at the wheel.

"Evidently she has visitors," I thought.

But when I went upstairs I found her alone in the drawing-room.

"Well, have you seen it?" she exclaimed.

"Seen what?" I asked.

"The new car I've just bought. Come along! I'm going to take you to Richmond Park. Georgina is coming too, and we'll let her out for a run."

The very last time I saw Mrs. Campbell was at Plymouth.

I had to go there for one night to meet my elder sister, and we stayed in the chief hotel. As we were walking in the town I saw large advertisements on the hoardings stating that Mrs. Patrick Campbell was starring there with a dramatic company of negroes. I told my

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sister we must go to see her act, and we went. There was only a small audience.

On the following day, when my sister had to leave for Cornwall, I sent a note to Mrs. Campbell asking if I could see her. She replied, "Uncle Hitch here! Of course I'll see you. Ask me to lunch!"

I did, and we spent two hours together. I could not help feeling very sorry at finding her wandering about the country in such strange company, but she made no complaint and was as brilliant in conversation and as vital as ever. I will say this for her, that she was one of the most courageous women I ever met. She could be cruel. She could be tiresome. She often played the buffoon. But she was greatly talented, had much imagination and a real sense of art. And, once I got to know her well, I could never help liking her. She broke many hearts. I knew personally two men of remarkable talent and fame who suffered through her. But she was a wonderful woman, and in parts that suited her a great actress. I still remember her death in a play called, I think, *For the Crown*, though I am not quite sure about the name. In it she played the part of a slave girl and presented us with a beautiful poem of slavery. At the end of the play she was stabbed to death and fell to the ground. Accustomed to the tricks of the theatre, I expected at this point a rapt look to transform her face for a moment before life flickered out of her. But directly she was stabbed every bit of expression in her vanished, and she became, as it were, merely dead matter. The spirit had fled. What was left had no meaning. As she fell forward facing the audience one saw neither rapture nor horror—only darkness. Death! The temple deserted! All the poetry gone! Only flesh left to be shovelled into the grave!

Mrs. Campbell died in Pau in the midst of this world war. I have heard no particulars of her death. Georgina, of course, had predeceased her, but I was told by someone who met her in Paris not long before her death that the reason why for years she had kept away from England was this; she had another Georgina with her, who objected to quarantine.

XIII

Among the many people I eventually knew well in London a few were outstanding. The Marchioness of Ripon ruled in the world of opera and was a great social light. Consuelo Duchess of Manchester, an American who hailed from Cuba and was born an Yznaga, was a

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leading hostess, intimate in the Prince of Wales's set and later among his close friends when he was Edward the Seventh. The Honourable Mrs. Ronald Greville, almost always called "Mrs. Ronnie," knew, was known to, and appreciated by, "everybody." Immensely rich, and ardently fond of being surrounded by brilliant and interesting people, her big house in Charles Street, Berkeley Square, was a centre of hospitality, and it was impossible to go there without meeting celebrities of all kinds, beauties, statesmen, financiers, critics, authors, poets. All Royalties, it seemed, were intimate friends of Mrs. Greville, and visited her in London and at her country place, Polesden Lacey, near Dorking. And all the distinguished foreigners who came to England were entertained by her.

Lady Dorothy Neville's luncheon-parties were celebrated, and Lady Jeune's—afterwards Lady St. Helier's—evening receptions and dinners.

Later Lady Cunard emerged from the crowd and became one of the most sought after people in London.

The Duchess of Sutherland, of course, was a great figure, as beauty, as hostess, and as an extraordinarily charming and sympathetic woman.

Others were Lady Bective, of whom I was very fond, the Honourable Mrs. George Keppel, Lady Algernon Gordon-Lennox, Lady Crewe, and Mrs. Hwfa Williams, the wife of the owner of Sandown Race-course, who gave an occasional London party at her house in Ovington Square, and drew to it many people who very seldom showed at a festivity of this kind. I went to an evening party of hers where we had supper in an improvised tent in the garden, and Madame Pavlova and a well-known amateur leader of cotillons danced round the tables together disguised in dominoes. Lord Hugh Cecil was one of the guests on this occasion and seemed to enjoy the unexpected fun as much as anybody.

Mrs. Asquith, now Lady Oxford, was, of course, one of the most sought after women in London, but though I was occasionally at a party where she was I can scarcely say I knew her, as I only once had a real talk with her. I first met her at a dinner given by Sir George and Lady Lewis in Portland Place, where I sat opposite to her, having taken in the lady who was afterwards Lady Willingdon and the Vice-Reine of India. The last time I found myself in a company with her was at a luncheon at Lady Cunard's, where I was placed next to her and had a chance at last of talking with her. This was during the war of 1914-1918. Winston Churchill was at this lunch as well as Mr. Asquith, and when the men were left in the dining-room for masculine talk I heard a long conversation about the war between them.

I remember Mr. Churchill saying, "We have the command of the sea."

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To this Mr. Asquith replied, "Yes. And the Germans so far have the command of under the sea."

Mrs. Asquith told me at lunch that she was keeping a day-to-day diary of all that she knew about the conduct of the war, the situation in England, and the general march of events. She also told me that this diary would only be published after her death, and that she would leave it behind her for the benefit of her two children. I don't know whether she held to this decision. She is an admirable writer and has spent the best part of her life behind the political scene as well as in the full glare of publicity, so the diary, if it exists, should be intensely interesting.

Lady Ripon I came to know fairly well. She was a beautiful, fascinating and very kind woman, and gave the most delightful dinners at Coombe that I ever went to. Everyone wanted to be asked to them, and those who went always thoroughly enjoyed themselves and showed it. Yet Lady Ripon seemed always to be doubtful about the success of the evening. More than once she said to me,

"Do you think it really went well? Was nobody bored?"

Invariably she needed to be reassured; which was extraordinary considering her position, the beauty of her house, the talent of her chef, and the multitude of brilliant people she grouped around her. She would take trouble for others. I know this because she once helped me out of a difficulty. This was during the war of 1914-1918. I was living and working in London and was given a few weeks' leave of absence. These I was very anxious to spend on a swift trip across the Mediterranean to Biskra and back. The difficulty was to get the permission to go to French territory just then on a mere pleasure trip. And I wanted to take two friends with me.

I happened to speak of this to Lady Ripon. She immediately said, "Leave it to me. I know all the French Embassy people and I'm sure I can manage it for you."

Two or three days later I received a *laissez-passer* for myself and my friends. Lady Ripon had gone personally to the Embassy and put my case before the authorities there. In consequence three people had a few wonderful days in the Sahara desert in the midst of the war.

Later on Lady Ripon did splendid work as the head of a great hospital for wounded soldiers.

All artists—except those she didn't admire as artists—loved her; writers, singers, actors, musicians, painters. Twice I spent the evening with her in her box at the opera. On the second of these evenings we received the unexpected visit of a very famous conductor, who for years had been a mainstay of the Italian works given at Covent Garden but who had, I believe, been got rid of during the season of that year.

He stayed for a little while, and I noticed that the conversation was

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distinctly uneasy. When at length he departed, Lady Ripon said, "Poor man! But I can't bear him!"

"But why not?" I asked. "Do you mean as a conductor?"

"I can't stand his complexion."

I must say it was rather—shall we say volcanic? But he hailed from the land of Vesuvius.

Consuelo Duchess of Manchester I met at a dinner in the house of that most musical of amateurs Mr. Frank Schuster, in whose music-room many of the best pianists and singers of the time might be heard in private.

I sat next to her, and was immediately attracted to her by her *bonhomie, savoir vivre* and buoyant vivacity. She had a zest for life which was immediately apparent. She made one feel that with all its troubles and disappointments, of which I knew later she had certainly had her share, life was emphatically worth living. And yet she had passed through great tribulation.

When I came to know her intimately she told me of some of it. Perhaps the worst blow that ever befell her was the untimely death of her two lovely daughters whom she adored. Doctor Axel Munthe, she told me, tried his utmost to save their lives. But the gods loved them too well and they were taken from her in early youth.

She lived in a big house in Grosvenor Square and asked me to visit her there. I went, and eventually we became close and dear friends. Our friendship lasted till her death. I stayed with her in a country house which she rented not far from London, and she stayed with me in the house I rented in Broadway, Worcestershire, next door but one to the Navarros' house. She took a most kindly interest in my well-being, and it was through her that, when I was making a good deal of money, I was persuaded to place my American investments in the hands of her banker, Mr. Harry Hollins, of the Hollins Bank in New York. That bank eventually, and quite unexpectedly, failed, but Mr. Hollins had safeguarded all I had placed in his keeping. I thought I had lost it, but a cable from him, received by me in Sicily the day after the failure, informed me that it was safe.

Not very long after the Duchess and I became friends, when I was in Sicily and she was in London, I received a telegram from her, telling me she meant to make a motor tour in Italy in the spring, and asking me whether I should care to accompany her on it. If so, would I meet her on a certain date in Genoa? She asked for a telegraphic reply.

Well, I confess that, much though I liked her, I hesitated. At that time I was selfishly fond of my liberty of action, and wondered whether I could resign it even for a few weeks. Yet I was tempted to go, and, after a short mental struggle, I resolved to risk it and telegraphed that I would come. But I wasn't at all certain that the tour would be a

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success, and even, coward that I was, arranged to have a telegram sent to call me away if my fears proved well founded.

Afterwards she confessed that she had done the very same thing, in case she found out that she just couldn't stand me.

We met as arranged at Genoa. She had a big and powerful motor to meet us, with an Italian chauffeur at the wheel. I slept on the previous night at the hotel she had named, but we did not meet until the following morning early, for the start.

As I got out of the lift I saw her at the bureau speaking to the hall porter. And before she saw me I looked at her from a distance and said to myself,

"Now what are we in for?"

Then I went up to the bureau and greeted her.

She welcomed me cordially, but I had a feeling that she was "looking me over," rather as one looks at a horse one is thinking of perhaps buying.

"Now for our tour!" she said.

We started on a bright morning.

That first day together was not really a success. I felt a dreadful obligation to be "up to the mark." She had selected me to be her companion. I must not disappoint her. I must be lively, entertaining, full of gay talk. And I made a continuous effort to be at my best. And consequently was no doubt nearly at my worst. As we rushed along over the Italian roads in the sunshine of spring I babbled, running on like the fabled brook. What I said, of course, I don't know, but, akin to the terrible man who even at breakfast discussed every subject known to humanity, from canary-birds to the prospect of eternity, I ranged freely from topic to topic until my vigorous and naturally vivacious companion must have been near to exhaustion.

She did not show it, but afterwards, when we were thoroughly at home with each other and could laugh over our beginnings, she said to me:

"When we stopped for the night after that first day with you, do you know what I did?"

"No; what?"

"I actually wrote out a telegram asking for the pre-arranged telegram of recall from London to be sent. I felt that you were altogether too talkative for poor me, and that I should be forced to give up our trip together. But I didn't send it."

We laughed over that. And I told her that I also had arranged for receiving one in case of necessity.

Very soon we settled down to a perfectly pleasant intimacy without strain and got on capitally together. We visited a great many places, among them Pavia, Siena, Ravenna, Rimini, Bologna, Perugia, Florence, and the famous Italian cure place written up for English

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readers by Lady Colin Campbell in the London *World*, Salso Maggiore. And we saw a great many "sights"; in fact too many. For it was sometimes exhausting. But the Duchess was untiring, like so many Americans, and certainly had a strong constitution though she suffered from sleeplessness. Because of this, at all the hotels where we stayed she engaged two adjoining bedrooms for herself lest she should be disturbed by sounds from her neighbours. We also had always a sitting-room. Her maid met her at each place we slept in, having travelled there by train. I had my bedroom on the far side of the sitting-room. This was all very proper. But an absurd thing happened when we arrived in Florence in the midst of the spring tourist season.

We stayed, I think, at the Grand Hotel, and wrote down our names on arrival, and were shown to the set of rooms the Duchess had ordered for us. Not long afterwards she asked me to go out on some errand for her. I believe it was to buy a book about Florence. I went, and on my return, passing through the hall of the hotel, I happened to glance at a board on which, under numbers, were the names of all the visitors staying there. To my great surprise—I will not say horror—I saw the following:

"Number"—let us say 28—"The Duchess of Manchester and Mr. Robert Hichens."

This was a little bit too much, and I mounted to our rooms and told the Duchess what I had seen. She could not help laughing. But she said, "I'm not very prudish, and I hope you aren't, but this must be changed at once or we shall be the scandal of Florence. Do go down to the bureau and tell them my name must be put under my numbers, and that yours must be put under your number. Ask them to do it at once. And you might stay and see it done. Will you?"

Of course I agreed and saw to the matter immediately.

Our tour, which we both enjoyed very much, especially our stay in Siena, where we heard the nightingales singing to the moonlight, finished in Milan. From there I went to the Hôtel Villa d'Este on Lago di Como, and the Duchess returned to London. We had had a wonderful time, but I think we were both very tired.

When the Duchess took a house in the country, but very near London, she often asked me to come there. Several times I met there Madame Nordica, the celebrated opera-singer, who was an intimate friend of hers. Madame Nordica was an extraordinarily vital person, in that reminding me of Miss Mary Garden. More than once she sang to us. One evening I remember she sang with tragic force "The Erlking" of Schubert. Evidently she enjoyed singing, even to an audience of two. She was genial, unaffected and, I should think, kind-hearted. I went to two memorable dinners at this house in the country. At one many clever people were assembled, and I sat next to one of

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the cleverest of them, Mrs. Edith Wharton, author of *The House of Mirth*, that short masterpiece *Ethan Frome*, and many other brilliant works. She was, besides being a distinguished writer, a thorough woman of the world, able to hold her own in any company. Her manner struck me as slightly hard that evening, but her talk was more than competent. Harry Cust, probably one of the four best talkers in London, sat, I think, on the other side of her and gave of his best. Mrs. Wharton had travelled a great deal and knew Morocco especially well, as the admirable book she wrote about the country showed. I told her of my first journey there in my early days, when even Tetuan was considered so unsafe that I was not allowed to walk in it without being accompanied by a guard. A great change had come about in the country before she went there. Much of the wildness was subdued, but even now Morocco is wonderfully picturesque, and Fez alone is worth the journey there. When Temple and I visited Tetuan we camped in the plain at some distance from the city, the rocky streets of which were strewn with refuse and smelt to high heaven. There we were visited at dawn by the Jewish merchants, who insisted upon showing us their wares, and at night we lit immense bonfires in front of our tents and had fantasias for the natives who travelled with us and the friends they picked up in the city. There was much eating of sheep killed in our encampment, and later on native music, dancing, and acrobatic leaps through the flames of our fires.

Mrs. Wharton saw Morocco differently. We rode on horseback when we travelled. I think she spun along over good roads in a motor-car. Travelling is easier now, but, to me, less attractive and far less romantic than it was when I first crossed the sea into Africa. There are times when comfort seems almost to swallow up romance. Too many motor-cars, too many bathrooms, and too little sense of the Far Away.

But most people prefer it like that, and one comes to expect, and even to demand it.

The second dinner which I remember well at that country house was given for Queen Alexandra and Princess Victoria of Wales, and was a very brilliant affair. Although I had been two or three times at large parties where Queen Alexandra was present, one of them at Stafford House, where I saw her deep in conversation with Nansen, the famous explorer, I had never been formally presented to Her Majesty. Now I was to be presented, and my hostess told me I was to sit at dinner beside the Princess Victoria.

Having been informed by several people that the Queen was rather deaf, but didn't like being spoken to loudly, I felt slightly nervous about meeting her for the first time, and wondered whether she would hear me if I spoke in my natural voice. A number of people had been asked to meet her, amongst them the Duke d'Albe, the Duchess

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of Devonshire, Lady Ripon, the Duchess of Rutland, Mr. Cust, Miss Muriel Wilson, one of the beauties of that time, the Lister Kayes, Mr. Amherst Webber, the accomplished musician, and—last but far from least—the gifted Reynaldo Hahn, singer, pianist, composer and conductor, who generally visited London during the Season, and whose drawing-room art was adored by Society with a big S.

When we were all assembled the Queen and Princess Victoria arrived with a lady- and gentleman-in-waiting, and before dinner I was duly presented to both of them, and had a conversation of several minutes with Her Majesty. To my great joy she did hear what I said and we talked about the same subjects. One was Egypt, I remember. Her Majesty said she knew I was fond of it and had written about it. As it happened, I had recently been working on *Bella Donna*, which was finished but had not yet been published, but of course I said nothing about this. Later on, at the end of the evening, I had a slightly awkward moment with Her Majesty. But this was after we had all had a delightful time, listening to the exquisite playing and singing of "Reynaldo," as Monsieur Hahn was universally called.

The Queen and Princess Victoria stayed until very late, although on the following day they were leaving London early for Sandringham, and Princess Victoria told me at dinner that when they reached Buckingham Palace that night her mother would certainly remain up for some time "seeing to" the selection and packing of the various little things, photographs, favourite *bibelots*, etc., she always carried with her when she changed her abode.

"My mother is seldom tired," she said, "although she doesn't look particularly strong."

When at last the Queen got up to leave we stood in a circle, and she went slowly round it, shaking hands and saying a few words to each one individually. I was almost the last to be spoken to, as I was standing by the Portuguese Minister, the Marquis de Soveral—the most popular diplomat in London, though he was called "the blue monkey"—near the drawing-room door.

At last the Queen came to me and paused.

"Are you bringing out a new book soon?" she asked, while everyone stood in silence listening.

I replied that I had finished an Egyptian book which would be published in the autumn probably.

Her Majesty evidently did not hear what I said, for she repeated her question, adding to it, "I asked you whether," etc. This time I raised my voice, spoke as distinctly as I could, repeated my answer and said:

"If Your Majesty will accept it from me, I shall send a special copy of the book to Buckingham Palace."

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This time the Queen did hear me. She smiled, extended her hand to me and said, "Please do. I shall be glad to have it."

Then she and the Princess departed.

The Duchess of Manchester had, of course, heard this exchange of words, and later on, when we were alone, she asked me what sort of book I was about to publish. I told her the scheme of *Bella Donna*.

She said, "It sounds very interesting. But if you will take my advice, have a copy of your *Garden of Allah* beautifully bound and send the Queen that. *Bella Donna* is evidently rather terrible. It might upset her."

I took the advice and sent a very beautiful copy of *The Garden of Allah* to the Queen, which was acknowledged by her lady-in-waiting, who wrote that the Queen admired the binding and was going to re-read the book as soon as she had time.

I had enjoyed my evening, as Princess Victoria was very gay and lively in conversation and Reynaldo's music was fascinating, but I had found it rather trying to talk about my writings while such a large group of important people stood listening to me.

The Duchess was a mine of information about the London Society of that time, for she knew everybody and had a very shrewd judgment of both women and men. In this faculty of sound judgment she was, I think, fully matched by "Mrs. Ronnie" (Mrs. Ronald Greville), of whose death I heard only a few days ago while I was writing these memoirs.

I did not know Mrs. Greville as intimately as I knew Consuelo Duchess of Manchester, for I never stayed in either of her houses nor did she ever stay in mine. But I went several times to her house in Charles Street. She lunched with me once or twice at Claridge's, and when she visited Egypt while I was living there I saw a good deal of her.

"Maggie Greville," as she was often called by those who did not call her "Mrs. Ronnie," was a social institution in London for a long time, and her great popularity lasted until the day of her much regretted death. She was not beautiful. I should think she had never been beautiful. Nevertheless she was very attractive. She was Scottish and proud of it, and she was exceedingly shrewd. There was a perpetual slight twinkle of shrewdness in her far-seeing eyes, and she could sum up a man's character more swiftly and more accurately than almost anyone else I knew.

I say "a man's character" because with me she talked more often about men than about women. She was specially interested in people who had careers, who were making history, who were doing big things in one of the arts. She didn't bother about unmeaning people and she could be drastic in her treatment of those whom she didn't like.

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Once, in speaking to me about a very notorious social climber in London—in this case a woman—she said,

"For years she has been trying to force her way into my house, but she'll never get there."

A great many people were devoted to "Mrs. Ronnie," but there were also others who were afraid of her. She was not, I am sure, at all meddlesome, but from what she herself told me I believe she now and then used her undoubted influence in high quarters to interfere in the careers of men who she was convinced were doing harm to the reputation of their country by their activities abroad. She was a very strong patriot, yet not at all unreasonable. And she travelled all over the world and was not in the least insular. Now and then she said something very cutting expressive of her conviction that a bad mistake had been made by an ambitious man.

For instance, one day when I was with her in Egypt she began talking to me about Lord Lloyd, who had formerly been High Commissioner there before he was raised to the Peerage. She knew him very well and told me a great deal about him. I said,

"Well, now he's gone to the House of Peers."

"Yes," she said, "just imagine! When I heard of it I sent him a wire."

"To congratulate him?" I said.

She laid a soft hand on my wrist—this was a habit she had—and said, with an inflection of almost shocked protest:

"My dear man! My wire was worded thus: 'Poor fellow I thought you were ambitious—Mrs. Ronnie.'"

I was not often in London when she was, but I lunched with her two or three times and met interesting people. And I went to a very gay afternoon dance which she gave for the soldiers and their girl friends during the war.

Much later on, when I was living in Egypt in a house I rented for six years on the edge of the desert near Cairo, she wrote to say she was coming out, and would I engage rooms for her at the Winter Palace Hotel at Louxor: a bedroom, sitting-room and maid's room, facing the garden. And she asked me to tell them they mustn't rob her, and added that when she travelled they asked her preposterous prices wherever she went.

I was myself going up the Nile to spend some weeks in a bungalow in the garden of the Hôtel de Louxor, and I did what she wished. Before staying in Louxor she came up the Nile on a big steamer *en route* to Assouan. She was going to visit Wadi Halfa before making her stay in Louxor. She asked me to visit her on the boat. I found her in her cabin busily writing letters. We spent the whole day together ashore, and when she came down the Nile I met her again, and introduced her to Prince Ismaîl Daoud, one of the Egyptian Royal

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family whom she was very anxious to meet, as she had heard how amusing and characteristic he was. She spent some time in Louxor, and then stayed in Cairo at Shepheard's Hotel and went out a great deal in the society there. She asked herself to dinner in my little Egyptian house, a bungalow hidden away in a rather delightful garden. There she met Prince Ismaîl again and made friends with my great friends, John Knittel the writer and his wife Frances Knittel. We all lunched with her at Shepheard's before she left, in the company of Howard Carter, the archaeologist who discovered the tomb of Tut-ankh-amen. Capital company she was, and I often longed to see more of her. She was a good friend, and I feel pretty sure that she could be a good, though never a subterranean, enemy. She seemed to me essentially honest and one who showed herself fearlessly as she was. I wish she were alive now.

I gave a sketch of a character suggested to me by her in a book of mine called *The Million*, and named the character Mrs. Armadale. A good many people seem to have guessed of whom I was thinking when I wrote it.

When I knew her, Lady Dorothy Neville was very small and looked tiny. She was old, of course, and I could not tell whether she had ever been pretty. But I could tell that she had a great deal of charm and intelligence. I never heard her say a witty thing, yet one was continually conscious of her pervasive intelligence when one was with her. She seemed to have no self-consciousness. Certainly she had absolutely no affectation; no snobbishness either. And snobbishness can be met with in what are called "the upper classes" as well as among the humbly born. Lady Dorothy seemed to me the sort of being whom many people call "a dear." Yes, she was a dear, and it was really a privilege to go to her lunch-parties. There were always interesting or charming people at them.

Once when I was in her house I sat next to Father Dolling, a clergyman who was doing great work in the East End. I had a long talk with him. I never met him again, unfortunately, but he made a strong impression upon me; of manly nobility, earnest kindness and an almost passionate desire to make conditions better for the very poor people among whom he worked.

Another guest at another luncheon in Lady Dorothy's hospitable house was Lord Halifax, the father of the late Viceroy of India. He was a delightfully talkative and spontaneous man. After luncheon we talked about apparitions and he told me a number of astonishing ghost stories. Evidently he believed in these appearances, as I did and do now. I have myself lived for a time in a house that I am certain was haunted, though I never saw the apparition that was seen several times by a friend of mine. When I met Lord Halifax I had recently

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been in Paris, where at the Grand Guignol I had seen the terrible play called in the English version, *At the Telephone*. Lord Halifax knew nothing about it, and asked me to describe it to him when I mentioned it. This I did to the very best of my ability. He was quite enthralled by the horror of the situation in the second of the two acts or scenes, in which a man, at the telephone in Paris, is in communication with his wife in the country. It is night. The wife with their child is in their house in a forest. Someone is trying to break into it. She has instinctively rushed to the telephone to tell her husband. He tries to give her advice as to how to act, and tells her where he has left his loaded revolver. She tries to find it and cannot. The would-be murderer breaks into the house and murders both wife and child. And the man at the telephone hears their dying screams, and, almost mad with horror, rushes from the stage, driven by a frantic desire to bring help, as the curtain falls.

I saw this horrible play in Paris, in London with Charles Warner, and in Rome with Zacconi in the principal part. Zacconi was so marvellous in it that I went to see it on three nights in succession.

Lord Halifax afterwards asked me to stay at his house near Leeds for the Leeds musical festival. He was exceedingly fond of music. Unfortunately I was prevented from going by work, and I never met him again. But he left me with a memory of one of the most genuine and delightful men I have ever encountered.

Lady Dorothy's very characteristic daughter, Miss Meresia, who drove herself about London in a very smart dogcart with a groom at the back, was always at these lunches. And I also met her brother a few times. He was very dark, foreign-looking, and had an enormous fund of good stories to tell.

The very last time I saw Lady Dorothy was at a matinée of Diaghileff's great Russian ballet. She was sitting exactly in front of me with a lady I did not know. A tiny figure she was, huddled up in what looked like an Indian shawl, and for the greater part of the performance she was evidently fast asleep.

I met the great Lord Curzon soon after he had come back from India at the end of his time there as Viceroy. It was at a large dinner-party. I sat next to Lady Ripon and he sat on her other side. As I knew that the men would be left to themselves when dinner was over I felt slightly nervous, as I had heard from various people that Lord Curzon could be very formidable, and had been told a good many stories of his freezing qualities. Would he take any notice of me? Should I be able to get on with him if he did?

I have an American friend, much younger than myself, with whom I was lunching once at his house in North Africa. During lunch he said something decidedly contemptuous about an exceedingly famous man who had had a brilliant career.

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Another guest protested and said, "Really you shouldn't speak of So-and-so like that. He is a very important man."

To this protest my American friend replied, with serene equanimity, "*Nobody* is important to *me*!"

I can't feel quite like that, and the obvious importance of Lord Curzon on this occasion roused my anxiety.

When dinner was over and all the ladies of the party left us there was a moment's pause. Then Lord Curzon turned to me with a gracious smile, got up from his chair and sat down beside me.

I forget now how our conversation began, but I remember that presently I managed to lead it to India, and succeeded in inducing the late Viceroy to talk of his time there. He made no allusion to his disagreement with Lord Kitchener and his departure from office because of it, but talked about the marvels of that great and still mysterious country. I could feel that he loved it. He spoke very frankly and was not in the least overpowering. Towards the end of our conversation I said that life in England must seem rather dull to him after the glories of India, and implied perhaps, rather than actually stated, that the change from being Viceroy, and processing on elephants in gorgeous ceremonies, must make things appear colourless and flat to him now that he was back among the mists and the comparative darkness of London.

He looked at me mischievously for an instant, and then said, "No, I don't find it so. Instead of mounting an elephant it seems to me perfectly natural to run down the Strand in the effort to catch up with an omnibus."

At that moment the men made a move, and I had no time to say that I simply couldn't imagine him pursuing an omnibus.

I met him at parties a few times after this, once at the Lister Kayes, but I never had more than a very few words with him, and I never went to his London house. A friend of mine did, however, and with rather unfortunate consequences.

This friend was spending the Season with very "important" friends who knew all the notabilities of London and were themselves notabilities, and one night, when Lord Curzon had married a second time and was Minister for Foreign Affairs, the lady of the house took him with her to an evening reception at the Curzons' home in Carlton House Terrace. Rain was pouring that night, and my friend, thoughtful as Mr. Chamberlain in subsequent years, provided himself with an umbrella. By an oversight, after the party was over he forgot it and left it in the cloakroom.

The following day was a Sunday. His memory functioned, and immediately after his lunch he set forth to the Curzon mansion and rang the bell. A young footman appeared, and he said he had come to retrieve his missing umbrella.

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"Please step in, sir, and I'll find it for you," said the footman.

My friend obeyed the invitation, stepped in and followed the footman to the cloakroom, which, it seems, was in the hall at the foot of a staircase. The footman went into the cloakroom and returned with an umbrella.

"Here's your umbrella, sir."

My friend took it with thanks and turned to go out.

As he did so he beheld Lord Curzon, arrayed in a frock-coat, with gloves on and a shining top-hat in one hand, descending the staircase.

Naturally he paused to greet his host of the previous night. But before the usual "How do you—?" had passed his lips Lord Curzon stretched out a hand, impounded the umbrella, and with the remark, "I'll trouble you for my umbrella!" left him and walked forth into London.

The unfortunate thing was this; it was Lord Curzon's umbrella.

What my friend said to the discomfited menial he never disclosed to me.

Among women who stood out from the crowd of intelligent, brilliant or beautiful women in London was one whose friendship for me I came to value highly. This was Lady Sackville, the mistress of Knole in Kent, which I prefer to all the other wonderful English houses I have had the chance of seeing.

Everybody, of course, has heard of Lady Sackville, the daughter of "Pepita" and Lord Sackville, who was at one time our Ambassador in Washington. There are many reasons for this wide notoriety. Firstly, she really was an extraordinary woman. Secondly, she lived and reigned in that amazing house, Knole, near Sevenoaks. Thirdly, she was left unexpectedly a great fortune and marvellous collections, not by any relation but by a faithful friend, Sir John Scott, whose story, too, had in it elements of romance. Fourthly, she figured in a *cause célèbre* which roused the excitement and curiosity of all England. Fifthly, she had an only child, a daughter, whose talent was so remarkable that, when quite young, she became known as both a gifted poetess and a gifted novelist.

I am almost ashamed to acknowledge that I have forgotten when and how I first met Lady Sackville, though I recall vividly a great deal about her. I must have met her in society. Certainly I did not meet her through the Scotts, who eventually became her enemies because their brother had been so much her friend: though I knew them all, the two sisters and the brother as well as Sir John Scott, and liked them all, and entertained them in the country, and was entertained by them, both in the country and in London.

Anyhow, I met Lady Sackville and liked her extremely and never ceased to like and appreciate her till she died.

She was entirely unlike any other person I have known. When I

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knew her she was no longer young, yet one never thought about age in connection with her. She must have been a beautiful girl and was a handsome woman. And she was a "character," original probably without being aware of it. Nobody resembled her. She was indeed a refreshing change from the crowd of average people.

She never posed. At least I never detected a suspicion of pose in her. She just went on being completely herself all the time, and herself was unfailingly attractive. Whether she ever irritated others I don't know. I cannot believe that she ever bored them. I suppose she was very clever. But I never thought about her being clever. She didn't bother about anything of that kind, and I didn't bother either. She was astonishingly easy to get on with, and hours spent with her travelled quickly.

I was often alone with her and enjoyed that solitude *à deux*. In London she would invite me to lunch or dine with her by telephone, and on receiving a glad acceptance would ask through the telephone what I wanted to eat. And she insisted on knowing. If one hesitated to reply she would begin suggesting good things, or would demand to know your dislikes.

"Are you fond of oysters?" or "Is venison bad for you?" or "Do you like grouse a little high or not?"

And after this colloquy, when you got to her London house in Mayfair you would find that the conversation through the telephone had been thoroughly laid to heart.

It has been cynically said about man, "If you want to get him to like you, feed the brute." I don't believe Lady Sackville acted as she did because she had that maxim in mind. I believe she was moved by a hospitable desire to give a guest the best of everything, and I should have relished a dish of herbs with her more than a first-rate dinner with a dull or disagreeable companion.

She had in her London house a curious Persian Room in which I had tea with her several times forgetful of being in London.

She was fond of possessing books autographed by their authors, and one day something happened which showed with what strange ease she could switch her mind from something very important to something unimportant which happened to please, or interest, her acquisitive part.

The *cause célèbre* in which she was the principal figure—she was at odds with the Scott family after the death of Sir John Scott—took place when I was living in Savoy Court, a sort of annex to the Savoy Hotel. She was in the witness-box for a long time, and was severely cross-examined by counsel for the Scott family, and showed intrepid determination and self-possession, as well as almost violent emotion in certain critical moments. Directly after the case was over I received a telephone message from her asking me if she could come to tea with

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me. All London was talking about her; some people taking her side, others the side of the Scotts. I answered the telephone and fixed an hour for the tea. I thought perhaps she wanted to see me in order to talk over the case, and possibly get sympathy from me, although she knew that I was on friendly terms with the Scotts as well as with her. But I was wrong.

When she arrived at my rooms, instead of coming alone she was accompanied by a messenger boy, or man—I forget which—who was almost staggering under the weight of a monstrous parcel of books.

'I want you to be kind enough to autograph these for my collection," she said, after greeting me. "Do you mind?"

Not a word about the trial just ended.

The many books were unpacked and I sat down to my task of writing my name in them while the messenger waited. This done, they were repacked, and he departed to her house in Mayfair.

Then we sat down to tea and eventually I got her to talk about "the Case." She didn't say a word against the Scotts and discussed the attacks made upon her with serene impartiality. I asked her whether she hadn't felt very nervous during her long and severe cross-examination.

"Not in the least," she replied. "Why should I be nervous? I was only telling the truth."

One afternoon when I was on the way with her to Hampton Court in her motor-car we passed a large section of land not far from Claridge's Hotel, on which the houses had been recently pulled down for a reason unknown to me. She glanced at it and said in a casual voice,

"I feel inclined to buy that and get Lutyens to build me a house on it."

"But wouldn't it cost a big fortune?" I said, astonished.

"I dare say it would. But sometimes I feel in an 'après moi le déluge' mood," she calmly replied.

Eventually, owing to circumstances that are private, she gave up living at Knole and established herself in a square in Brighton, where she had two large houses thrown into one and turned into a remarkable mansion by Sir Edward Lutyens. I visited her there. Afterwards she took another house in the country near Brighton and lived there till she died.

Once I stayed quite alone with her at Knole. She had a great dislike of crowds and a curious horror of heat. I was at Knole in the winter, or late autumn. She told me that when she was quite alone there she always dined out of doors even in the coldest weather, but that on my account we would dine indoors near an open window.

When she was living happily at Knole she and Lord Sackville sometimes gave what I can only call a great banquet in the glorious banquet-

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ing-hall, when from forty to sixty people sat down at one immense table. I went to Knole for one of these banquets and felt almost as if we were back in the time of Queen Elizabeth or Henry the Eighth.

Towards the end of her life she became quite blind—from cataract, I believe. She asked me to come down in summer to the last house she lived in and to spend the day with her there. I went, and found her on a terrace stretched out on a sort of invalid's couch, totally blind. She was quite calm and apparently resigned. As I understood she was suffering from cataract, I begged her to have an operation, which could, I suppose, have restored her sight. But she absolutely refused.

That day one of the many oddities in her character was made manifest to me. On my arrival I was received by a middle-aged butler. And while I was sitting by her couch she asked me if I had noticed him. I said "Yes." And then she launched out into a vivid description of his enormities. He was a rascal. He robbed her. He had no decent feelings. He was quite a curse in the house.

I was shocked and said, "But why don't you get rid of him, then?"

"Oh well," she said. "He mightn't easily get another place perhaps."

Later on, shortly before I was going away, she said, "Will you do me a favour?"

"Of course," I said, "with pleasure. What is it?"

And what do you think it was? This butler, whose turpitudes she had been describing, was a reader. He had a copy of my book *Bella Donna*, and was exceedingly anxious to have my autograph in it. Would I write it? It would give him so much pleasure.

Naturally I said I should be delighted. The butler was summoned, the book was brought.

"Just your name and a few words to say it's for him!" she said.

I did what she wished, and presently said goodbye to her. Soon afterwards I left England and I never saw her again.

When I was writing on the London *World* Lady Colin Campbell was a frequent contributor. Sometimes she wrote on pictures, sometimes on general subjects, or on her journeys abroad. This was, of course, long after the famous divorce case between her and Lord Colin, a son of the Duke of Argyll.

She was an extraordinarily good-looking woman of a gipsy type, tall, dark, with what had been a wonderful figure, altered in some degree, when I used to see her, by the complaint for which she every year used to visit the Italian bath place, Salso Maggiore. (I went there once for throat trouble but it did me absolutely no good.) I believe she suffered either from acute rheumatism or from arthritis. She used to go about a great deal nevertheless. I saw her at concerts, at exhibitions of pictures. But it was obvious that she suffered.

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She was a very clever woman and a woman of spirit, and I should think a stoic. Her divorce case, of course, with its ugly details and scandalous accusations against her, had made her very notorious, and she had to turn a brave face to the curious world, which whispered about her wherever she went. But she was always perfectly self-possessed and seemed to have a thorough-going contempt for the scandal-mongers. Eventually I knew her, though not intimately, and found her well worth knowing. And one evening I gave a dinner of four at the Prince's Restaurant in Piccadilly, the only other guests besides Lady Colin being the famous Mrs. Langtry (Lady de Bathe) and a handsome young man about town who was very anxious to meet two such talked-about beauties.

I knew Mrs. Langtry much better than I knew Lady Colin, dined with her now and then at her house in Tedworth Square, and several times escorted her to see plays in the London theatres.

She, too, had been during a great part of her life a target for the shafts of the gossips. But she took it all, it seemed to me, with great composure, and made the most of her life when the twilight began to fall round her.

Long before I knew her, when I was under twenty, I had seen her on the stage as Lady Teazle in the Prince's Theatre at Bristol, and thought her the most lovely being I had ever set eyes on.

She had, of course, greatly changed, but as long as I knew her she always preserved exceptional good looks, and on the night of that dinner both she and Lady Colin looked astonishingly handsome in totally different ways.

Mrs. Langtry had marvellously beautiful blue eyes. Her manner was very natural and she seemed a very straightforward woman with "no nonsense about her," but naturally she was conscious of the beauty that had been acclaimed almost all over the world, and I never saw her pass a mirror without looking into it.

I came to know her first in connection with the theatre. When Sir George Alexander decided to produce *Bella Donna* he at first wanted Mrs. Langtry to play that part, and he sent me to see her at her house in Pont Street and told me to try to induce her to accept it, "though," he said, "possibly she may think the situation Bella Donna is in when the play opens is in some ways rather akin to her own."

I went to Pont Street, was received by a Colonel Somebody, who at that time I believe acted as a sort of glorified and superior Groom of the Chambers to her, and eventually was admitted to see her. I had the manuscript of the play with me for her to read at her leisure.

She received me pleasantly and I told her at once that we wished to offer the very excellent part of Mrs. Armine to her.

I felt immediately that her mood about this was distinctly doubtful. Evidently she had read my book on which the play was founded.

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"Ah—" she said. "Mrs. Armine! You want *me* for that, do you?"

"Yes," I said. "Sir George Alexander wants you."

She looked at me rather hard for a moment and then said, "Well, I'll read the play. But I'll make no promise!"

"Sir George is absolutely positive of its success with the public," I said.

"Ah! So *you* wrote that book!" she said. "There are two or three things in it which seem to me rather like—"

She broke off.

"Leave the play with me," she eventually said, "and I'll study it. But I'm not at all sure that I'll consent to play in it."

I left it. Not many days after my visit Sir George received a note from her declining to act in it. Sir George didn't seem to be at all surprised by this. And the part was offered to, and accepted by, Mrs. Patrick Campbell. I dare say Mrs. Langtry would have acted it well, but hardly as well as Mrs. Campbell, who was admirable in it except when she was "monkeying." She had a very bad habit of sometimes playing the fool when she was on the stage, and even of trying to make those in a scene with her break down. I have myself seen her do this. The devil seemed at times to enter into her. Mrs. Langtry was totally incapable of anything of that kind. She was not a great actress, but she always did her best.

As a woman I liked her. Unlike some great beauties, she was very intelligent, and she was by no means a humbug. For years many people, men especially, tried to spoil her. But she did not seem spoilt and she struck me as honest. When I began really to know her it was a good deal later, after the 1914 war, and we never spoke about *Bella Donna* and her refusal to play in it. She was living in Tedworth Square. Once when I dined with her alone there she talked to me about racing. For many years she had racehorses and won several big events and had a house at Newmarket. She told me she was one of the comparatively few owners who had made money by racing. At one time she owned a yacht called, I think, *The White Ladye*. She had a great life, but when she was "getting on in years" I think she felt lonely. And I had two or three letters from her in which she alluded to "my grey hairs" and wrote in rather a sad vein.

No woman on earth, I should think, was ever more adored for her beauty than she was—the Dean's lovely daughter of Jersey.

I often saw the Bancrofts after they had given up theatrical management, though now and then they still acted, as in *Diplomacy* with Sir John Hare, who kindly seconded me when A. E. W. Mason put me up for the Garrick Club. If you had never seen Sir Squire Bancroft on the stage, and had only known him off it, I doubt if you would

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have guessed that he could be an admirable actor in parts that suited him. Lady Bancroft, on the other hand, seemed a heaven-born actress. I have never heard anyone else tell a funny story as well as she did. Instinctively she acted it. She was a perfect *comédienne*, and in some mysterious way, without doing very much, seemed for a moment almost to become the character she was telling you about. She once related to me a story about a stupid London policeman arguing in court with a sharp-witted London magistrate, and I saw before me both the magistrate and the policeman.

But she could also be serious.

One afternoon when I called upon her she told me an extraordinary story connected with two dreams. It had to do with the mysterious murderer, Jack the Ripper, who at one time kept all London in a ferment of excitement by his horrible crimes. No one knew who he was, and wild rumours were whispered about him, more than one well-known man being suggested as possibly "Jack." I don't know positively that he was ever caught. If he was, the fact was for some reason kept from the public. But I heard that eventually Scotland Yard discovered him and that he committed suicide. His name, however, was never mentioned to me.

What Lady Bancroft told me was this.

During the excitement about The Ripper, in which she shared, she dreamt that she was wandering alone by night in the East End of London, and on turning a corner into a narrow street saw the back of a man who was bending over a body lying at his feet and doing something to it. She stopped and stood still. The conviction came to her that the man was Jack the Ripper, who had just murdered another unfortunate woman.

While she watched, the man straightened up, thrust something into the pocket of the overcoat he was wearing, and walked away down the street. She followed. (She was in her dream compelled to follow.) But as she drew near to the body on the ground, a woman's, she averted her head and for a moment shut her eyes. Then she continued to follow the man. She said to herself, "I must and will find out who he is."

On through the night they went, and presently came into a part of London familiar to Lady Bancroft. They had reached the West End, and she remembered the rumours she had heard that "Jack" was a gentleman, and possibly a well-known one.

They walked on, one behind the other, till they came into a fashionable square. (From certain things Lady Bancroft said I believe it was Grosvenor Square, but she did not actually say so.) They crossed it and came to a large mansion with a portico. The man stepped up into this, stood still, always with his back turned towards her, unbuttoned his overcoat and felt for something.

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"His latchkey!" she thought. "This is his home!"

She was right. He took out a key and thrust it into the door. The door opened. She thought he would go in without letting her see his face. But no! He turned sharply round and, to her horror, she saw the face of a very well known man whom she had met in society. (She did not tell me who he was.)

The shock was so great that she woke up.

Now comes the strangest part of the story.

The Bancrofts had a house in Berkeley Square and were "at home" on Sunday afternoons. The following day was a Sunday and Mr. Alexander Yorke, who was for a long time a groom-in-waiting on Queen Victoria, and was an old friend of the Bancrofts, came to tea. She was alone. Her husband had been obliged to go out. Naturally enough, her mind was still dwelling on her dream and she related it to Mr. Yorke. He listened in silence till she came to the moment when the murderer in the portico turned and faced her.

Then he said, "Stop a minute!"

She stopped, and he added, "Don't tell me who the man was. I'll tell you!"

"But how can you?" she said. "I haven't told you where the house was. You can't have guessed."

"No, I haven't," he said. "But I had practically the same dream last night. The man was ——."

He mentioned the name. It was the name of the man Lady Bancroft had seen in her dream.

Although in after years I knew Mr. Yorke very well, and he stayed with me twice, once in a house I had in Broadway, Worcestershire, and once elsewhere, I can't remember that I ever mentioned this matter to him. He was a spiritualist, and I "sat" with him twice, in the company of Sir Eric and Lady Barrington, and Miss Wingfield. I also "sat" a few times with others, but I was never convinced that we were communicating with the souls of the so-called "dead."

Florence Marryat, the novelist and daughter of Captain Marryat whose sea stories were so famous, was an acquaintance of mine during part of my sojourn in London. She wrote a book called *There is No Death*, and was apparently a convinced spiritualist. I wrote a long narrative poem called "The Sacrifice of Genius" for the Christmas number of a London weekly paper. She liked it, and recited it in public at a big charity matinée. And after this she said to me, "I must make you a convert to spiritualism."

A séance was arranged in the flat of a friend of hers and I went to it.

The medium did not seem to me at first sight very promising, or likely to be in close contact with those in another and better world than ours. He was the ex-driver of one of those awful four-wheel cabs called "growlers" that used to ply in the London streets. He

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was short, fat, had a red face and side-whiskers. I was introduced to him, and was one of those who were permitted to search him. We did not find any concealed apparatus.

This gentleman retired to a chair in an angle of the room across which thin curtains were then drawn. He was provided with a "luminous slate." The large room in which we sat—there must have been about sixteen people—was then plunged in darkness and we waited. I cannot remember that there was the usual music "to help things" on this occasion.

Around the walls of the room there were many small pictures covered with glass. And before long I heard many tappings, which certainly seemed to be made upon the glass coverings.

"They are here!" someone said in a hoarse voice.

Florence Marryat sat next to the cabinet and not far from it. I sat next to her on her left. She had lost a much-loved daughter called Violet, and was very keen to get into communication with her.

After some time the luminous slate was pushed out between the curtains of the cabinet, and relieved against it there was a very white face and above it was a white binding which concealed the head. The lips in this face pouted and made a loud kissing sound, as if inviting osculation.

"Is it for me?" several voices said, one after the other.

The sound of kissing ceased as if to convey a negative.

Then Florence Marryat exclaimed, "Is it *Violet*?"

The kissing noise came again immediately, and seemed to get louder in a crescendo.

Florence Marryat sprang up, went to the face, and bending down met its lips with her own.

Mother and child! The assemblage was thrilled. But when Miss Marryat came back and sat down once more by my side she touched my arm and said in my ear,

"Don't tell them! But I'm sure I've kissed the coachman!"

That mediums, however amazing in what they bring about, are not always the most highly educated of human beings, became apparent to me when someone told me of the following incident which happened at a séance.

A number of earnest spiritualists assembled together to try to "get through" with the help of a celebrated medium. There was soft music, they sat in the dark, and presently the medium remarked in a deep voice that he wished to know whether any Roman Catholic was present among them. Instantly the voice of a lady replied eagerly:

"Yes. I am a deeply believing Catholic. Why do you ask?"

"I ask because there is a great spirit here who wishes to communicate with a Catholic. Wait one moment and he will probably deliver a message."

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"Who is it?" whispered the lady's voice.

"It is the spirit of Cardinal Manning."

(This was, of course, after the famous Cardinal had "passed over.")

"Hush!" added the medium.

There was a devout silence, which was broken at last by a frail and apparently far-off voice which uttered these tremendous words—

"Benedictine, my daughter!"

Year after year the winter months, and the spring months till the 1914 war began, and the Sirocco made its disagreeable presence too severely felt, found me in Sicily, living happily with a small circle of friends who loved the island as I did.

Maude Valérie White came regularly, and even built herself a villa outside the village, facing the magical view to the straits and Calabria. The Duke of Bronte also built a villa facing the other way to Etna, the terrible mountain, and planned and laid out a wonderful garden which descended in a series of terraces towards the sea and Giardini, the long village where the trains for Taormina disgorge their passengers. He divided his time between his villa and his castle of Maniace on the far side of Etna. His sister, Mrs. Evans, born Rosa Hood, was often with him in both his houses, and joined our intimate little circle, which included Mr. and Mrs. William Sharp and two friends who were almost always mentioned together, and who were known to everybody as a couple of sympathetic originals.

These were "Miss Wallace and the Major." The name of the latter was Fraser. But in my hearing he was invariably called simply "the Major."

The exact history of the Major I never learned. But from occasional hints dropped by Miss Wallace I fear that it must in the long ago have been tragic, though what was the nature of the tragedy she never disclosed, and I never attempted to probe into it.

Miss Wallace and the Major were already established in Taormina when I first went there, and were on intimate terms with Mr. Hood, as he was then. For it was only later on that, on the death of his father Viscount Bridport, he came into the Dukedom, and was also given the English title of a knighthood and became Sir Alexander Nelson Hood.

Miss Wallace belonged to a wealthy English family who lived mainly, it seemed, judging by her talk of them, which was often humorous and tinged with a not unkind flavour of gentle satire, either actually in or in the near neighbourhood of the lordly quarter of London called Hyde Park Gardens. Evidently, though of this family, she could not have resembled it.

For a moment I was tempted to call her a Bohemian. But on reflection I don't believe that Bohemian is exactly the right word for her. Better not to label her. No label I can think of would fit her

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exactly. When I knew her she was very thin, dressed generally in garments which seemed rather inclined to trail, and had very frizzy hair and a lot of it. And she had a talent which was genuine, bold and uncompromising. She was a painter. And she had a studio on the right of the road which leads up to the Hôtel Timeo, where I always lived when I was in Taormina, and the Greek theatre which is the pride of the place. Miss Wallace painted, but not to sell. She had no need to earn money. She painted to please herself, but pleased a good many others too, some of them excellent judges of the art, among them Mr. Frank Brangwyn.

Adjoining her studio the Major had a mysterious muddly sitting-room, in which I don't believe any human eye ever saw him sitting down. I at least never did in all the years that I frequented Taormina.

To me he seemed to be perpetually in motion. Wearing invariably a yellowish-green overcoat of venerable age, and a nondescript cap with flaps, he was for ever crossing the road, either coming from or going to his sitting-room, which was worthy of a description by Balzac. Or if not doing that, he was usually stealing, with an air of profound secrecy and purpose, into one of the curiosity shops which in those days abounded in Taormina. All the dealers were his close friends, and he was supposed to be "an authority," whose attribution was Law about curios.

Miss Wallace and he slept and ate in a small hotel in the village. Full of charity, she helped a good many poor people and looked after many of the young Sicilian ragamuffins for whom nobody else seemed to care.

But she also painted assiduously, giving, however, no quarter to the landscape. Not for her were the facile watercolours so beloved of the average travelling English spinster with a "pretty taste" in art. She painted in oils, and to get the full effect of her work one had to stand a good way from it. Then what had seemed at first sight to be rather a muddle of paint became mysteriously a bold and remarkable slice of true Sicily. I have a painting by her to this day in my bedroom near Ragaz. And I never look at it without feeling once more in the beautiful island with the blue sea and the blooming almond trees. It was left to me in her will by dear Maude Valérie White, who was a great friend and admirer of Miss Wallace.

She had met the Major for the first time when she was working in Cairo as a hospital nurse. Why she became a hospital nurse I never knew. But after studying art in Paris, and after hunting with ardour in England, for a time she dedicated herself to the care of the sick in Egypt, and there she and the Major met and became fast friends for life. Both are long ago dead, but I often think of them, and never without affection. They were both so delightfully, so refreshingly, themselves and unlike other people. Very often I had tea alone with

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Miss Wallace in her studio on my way home to the Timeo from a long walk in the mountains. And always I found something original and interesting in her conversation. I had, too, many talks with the Major, not in his sitting-room, but in his company outside of it. He often lunched with the Duke of Bronte when I was of the party, and his talk was salted with a humour, sometimes cynical, which I greatly appreciated.

I think he was a very kind man, but he seldom deceived himself about human nature. Not every genius was a genius to him. Once I remember we talked about travelling.

"Globe-trotters!" he remarked. "One meets them everywhere. Apparently they have been all over the world—and what do they know about it? To judge by their talk, nothing at all—except the insides of hôtels de luxe and whether the cooking in them was good or abominable. Seen everything and know nothing! Strange! Strange!"

Miss Wallace was not the only painter in Taormina. She had an energetic rival in an American called Charles King Wood.

Mr. Wood—or "Woodo" as the Sicilians usually called him—was a fixture in Taormina. He was there when I came there as a comparatively young man and he died there a short time ago. His profession was the reproduction of Etna on canvas. He must have painted the volcano with its plume of smoke many hundreds of times. And he sold an enormous number of pictures to the travellers who visited the village. He made it his business to become acquainted with everybody, and he invited everybody to lunch or tea in his rooms. And each one, before leaving, had to buy one of his pictures as a memento.

I bought one eventually. One had to conform to the rule.

Woodo did not invariably paint Etna in exactly the same way. Sometimes he slightly, but definitely, altered the shape of the mountain. Once I ventured to draw his attention to this. He answered:

"I see it that shape when I feel depressed."

Once a tragedy happened in connection with Woodo. The Duchess of Westminster, now Constance Duchess of Westminster, had to do with it. And so had I.

One season, when most of the sightseers had left us, she arrived at Giardini in the Duke's yacht, with her parents, Colonel and Mrs. Cornwallis-West, and they left the yacht at anchor and came to stay in the Timeo Hotel where I was.

Mrs. Cornwallis-West had been in her time one of the famous women who were labelled "The Professional Beauties," a group which included Mrs. Langtry and Mrs. Wheeler. Her photograph had been exhibited in numberless windows. I had seen it when I was young, I think it represented her in a snowstorm. She was Irish, and was full of Irish

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charm, impetuosity and *bonhomie*. The Duchess and her parents were thoroughly good pals and laughed and chaffed with each other from morning till night. One day when we were lunching together the Duchess made a wreath with flowers taken from a vase on our table and decorated her father's bald head with it, to the astonishment of the Sicilian waiters—who, by the way, were lost in admiration of her. Three maids accompanied the party.

Mrs. West went donkey-riding, but her daughter, who is a splendid horsewoman, despised the ass and preferred to make excursions on foot.

One day she and I went for a long walk in the mountains, and on our way home towards evening walked through the long main street of the village, in which Woodo had his rooms.

In a prominent place outside the entrance was a printed announcement stating that his paintings were on sale within and that "inspection" of them was "invited."

The Duchess noticed this and made some remark about it, and wishing to do Woodo a good turn I asked her whether she would like to have a look at his work. She said she would, and we entered and went upstairs. The painter was there, I introduced him to her, and she asked if she might see some of his pictures.

Might she not? At once a small easel was brought forward and picture after picture was placed upon it. Before we went in the Duchess had inquired of me whether Mr. Wood's work was good. I had answered,

"I must leave you to judge of that."

She replied that she was not an expert, but that her father knew a lot about art.

She told this also to the painter, and said she would like to show a few of the pictures to her father. Woodo agreed eagerly, the Duchess selected some of them, and he promised to send them up to the hotel to be seen by Colonel Cornwallis-West. Then we bade him good-bye and departed.

The sequel was rather unfortunate.

When the pictures arrived and Colonel Cornwallis-West had examined them he said to his daughter,

"My dear Sheila, you simply can't buy these things. Where on earth could you put them? Have them packed up at once and send them back to the painter—with many thanks for the loan of them."

This was done, and on the following morning early I received an indignant letter from Woodo. He told me that he could not understand "the meaning of this." He had fully understood that the Duchess had bought all the pictures, though they had not been paid for. Otherwise, of course, he would never have sent them to the hotel.

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And he adjured me to see the Duchess at once and to "put the matter right with her."

As I knew the pictures had not been bought but had only been sent "on approval" I was forced to tell him so, and added that I had hoped to do him a good turn but could not possibly take any further steps in the matter.

Thus the tragedy ended, but for a long time afterwards the painter felt very aggrieved—without reason.

In Taormina at that time there were three young Sicilian barbers who played on a mandoline and guitars and came now and then to the various hotels to perform while the guests were dining. They were very popular with those who liked Neapolitan and Sicilian airs.

The party from the yacht heard of them and asked me to engage them to come to the Timeo one night and make music for us while we were at dinner. They came and were very successful.

On the following morning Mrs. Cornwallis-West came up to me on the terrace, spoke about their performance and said,

"Do you think those nice barber boys would like to hear Sheila sing?"

The Duchess had a fine voice and sang often *en amateur*.

I said I thought the barbers would be delighted to hear her sing, but how could it be managed? They certainly couldn't accompany her.

"But you've got a piano in your sitting-room," said Mrs. Cornwallis-West. "Couldn't we have it up there, and couldn't you play for Sheila?"

I said if the songs were not very difficult I might manage it, but I must demand a rehearsal.

"Of course!" said Mrs. Cornwallis-West. "Do ask the boys for this evening."

I did this, and needless to say the invitation was accepted.

The rehearsal took place in the afternoon. In the evening the barber boys arrived dressed in their best and carrying their instruments. While we dined they played to us. When dinner was over, I ordered some wine and cakes to be brought up to my sitting-room, and we all seven went upstairs and spent a most enjoyable time there. The Duchess sang several songs. I did my best at the piano. And the evening ended with an almost riotous performance of the Tarantella played by the barbers. The only drawback to the complete success of this unusual festivity was the fact that the rather minute size of my room made it impossible for the Tarantella to be danced by the Duchess, the Cornwallis-Wests and myself.

I think Mrs. Cornwallis-West regretted this. She was the life and soul of the evening, her good spirits, unselfconsciousness, and Irish *bonhomie* putting everyone at their ease.

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The boys left us enchanted by their experience, and with a nice little sum in their pockets.

Before the yacht sailed I went on board and had tea there. She was a lovely vessel. And I received an invitation to accompany the party in a cruise along the Italian coast.

I was obliged reluctantly to refuse this pleasure, as I was very busy on a piece of work which I had undertaken to finish in a given time. Consolation for this disappointment, however, reached me later. For I received a letter telling me that the yacht had encountered terrible weather, that nearly all those on board had suffered acutely from sea-sickness, and that much of the crockery had been smashed.

I met Mrs. Cornwallis-West more than once in her daughter's house later on in London, and also met her elder daughter, Princess Pless, who was as spirited and gay then as she was beautiful. She sang too, I was told, but I never accompanied her.

While I was in Taormina from time to time many famous people came there, among them the Empress Eugénie, the German Emperor, the German Empress, Queen Margherita of Italy, and Mrs. Besant, who became such a power in India.

There was great excitement when it became known that the Kaiser was coming to spend the day among us accompanied by a numerous retinue, all of whom were men.

He left his yacht I think at Messina, and drove up from Giardini at the head of a long procession of carriages filled with his attendants. I happened to be alone at a turn of the road when the procession appeared, and as the Kaiser's carriage rounded the bend I took off my hat. In reply to my salute the Kaiser took off his hat and stared straight into my eyes with an expression of searching determination.

He visited the Greek Theatre and afterwards lunched on the terrace of the Hôtel Timeo, and spent nearly three hours there, after lunch walking up and down the terrace in eager conversation with first one and then another of those who accompanied him. He seemed to be in holiday spirits and looked as if he had not a care in the world.

On another day the Empress arrived with her daughter and a very large suite. She also lunched at the Timeo, where Queen Margherita had tea when she came.

The Grand Duke of Hesse stayed for several days in the hotel with an equerry, and Prince Joachim of Prussia also made a stay there with two friends.

As to the famous Mrs. Besant, she turned up one spring.

I was walking one afternoon alone in the mountains, when on a narrow path at a corner I met a large broad-shouldered man with a beard striding along with a curious panther-like gait, accompanied and followed by some boys who were obviously Indians. As they

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passed by I received from the man, who looked middle-aged, a very strong and very disagreeable impression. It was an impression of baleful power, and for a moment seemed to wrap me round as if it were an emanation. The boy by his side was a slim good-looking youth, almost schoolboy-like, I thought.

This boy, I presently found out, was Krishna Murti, afterwards called the Indian Christ, and the man with the beard was Mr. Leadbeater, the writer who collaborated on several books with Mrs. Besant, and to whose name later on attached a great deal of ugly scandal.

Shortly afterwards Mrs. Besant joined the party, who all lived together in a hotel in the village, not the Timeo.

They remained there for several weeks and I often met them walking but never knew them.

I had heard Mrs. Besant lecture several times in London, and thought her, and still think her, the best speaker, barring perhaps Mr. Gladstone, whom I have ever heard. She and Leadbeater were writing a book together, and Krishna Murti was, I believe, being carefully educated to carry on later his profession of the Christ enshrined in an Indian body. A cult grew up about him called The Cult of the Silver Star, but eventually he repudiated the attribution to him by Mrs. Besant of supreme holiness, and the last I heard of him was that he was very fond of lawn-tennis and dancing.

Among others whom I knew well in Taormina was Archie Clarke, a charming youth, now famous as Sir Archibald Kerr Clarke, the British Ambassador in Moscow. I met him later on in America. I met also his sister.

With the Duke of Bronte's sister, Mrs. Evans, I took long walks, and heard from her a good many stories throwing sidelights on Queen Victoria's Court.

One was this.

Queen Victoria disliked London and went there very seldom. But now and then she felt obliged to come to Buckingham Palace to hold "a drawing-room," which took place in the afternoon. Even on those few occasions Her Majesty seldom remained to receive the curtsies of all the débutantes, and caused a good deal of disappointment by only staying for a comparatively short time and then deputing the Princess of Wales to receive the rest of the company.

Mrs. Evans told me that the reason why the Queen went away was that the procession of deeply curtsying women and girls flowing unendingly past her caused in her a feeling of sickness akin to *mal de mer*, and that in consequence she was forced to retire.

"One afternoon," Mrs. Evans said, "I drove out in the Park with Her Majesty after a drawing-room, and she told me of the physical nausea which attacked her at the sight of the succession of dipping figures.

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"'I have to get out into the air,' she said, 'But I can't let people know why.'"

What has become of Taormina now? I have had no news from there yet. All I know is that the German general staff in Sicily made their headquarters in the Monastery hotel at the opposite end of the village from the Timeo during the recent fighting, and that Taormina was bombarded from the sea by the ships of the British navy.

XIV

DURING the years before the war of 1914-1918, which changed so much, and completely changed my own life, in a most unexpected way, among many good friends I made also a few acquaintances who were interesting to the public that cared for art, music and literature, and one or two who were noted in politics. Among these were Mr. Frank Harris, famous as a talker, as the editor of the *Fortnightly Review* for a time and also of the *Saturday Review*, and as a writer of some remarkable short stories, one play, *Mr. and Mrs. Daventry*, and a book of real value called *The Man Shakespeare*; Thomas Hardy, the great novelist; Mr. Whistler, the painter; Mr. Arthur Balfour, afterwards Lord Balfour; and Sir Edward Elgar, England's greatest composer.

I was only with Frank Harris once and spent part of the afternoon with him at a friend's house just off Park Lane. He had a very remarkable voice. It boomed across the drawing-room in which we were sitting almost like a great bell. And while I sat there opposite to him listening to his interesting conversation I remembered the tone of a wonderful church bell which I used to listen to as I sat in the Alhambra at Granada in Spain, mounting up from the hidden city below me. Mr. Harris evidently looked upon me as a boy at that time. I was in awe of him as a distinguished editor. He was immensely clever and fully aware of it, a rather overpowering personage. I often met his wife, Mrs. Frank Harris, in society after she had given up living with him. She must have been by nature adventurous or she would surely never have married him, and one had only to be with her to understand that she could never have successfully coped with him. The last book he ever wrote, his life of Mr. Bernard Shaw, I thought brilliant. But his autobiography, *My Life and Loves*, was so disgusting in many passages that I can't conceive how a sane man could have published it.

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Thomas Hardy I met at three or four rather literary parties. One was given by Mr. and Mrs. William Sharp. I was introduced to him and had some short talks with him. I had read all his books and admired, and even revered him. I found him one of the most quiet and, as it seemed, retiring of men.

He was small, and in features reminded me very much of the Powell family whom I had known so well as a boy and youth. Even he recalled to me the face of him who was afterwards Lord Baden-Powell, the famous founder of the Scout movement. I believe indeed that he must have been very like "B. P." in appearance. He talked in a low voice, almost shyly. But he could be very definite.

Just before I met him for the first time I had been reading a novel of Mallock's, which I had admired very much. It was not the brilliant skit called *The New Republic*, but a love story. And it had delighted me.

I spoke of it with enthusiasm to Mr. Hardy, who had also read it, and finally said, "Don't you think it is wonderfully good?"

He looked at me earnestly.

"Oh no!" he then said in a soft voice. "Not *wonderfully* good. No. Not even very good!"

I remember I felt deflated. But I don't believe he had any intention to score off me or to put me in my place. His manner was kind, even gentle, and there was not the least trace of self-conceit in it. In his apparent simplicity and self-respecting modesty he recalled to me another famous writer, Sir James Barrie. I often wished I could get to know him better. One of his books, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, affected me so intimately when I read it, and even when I re-read it, that it became to me like a personal tragedy. I had the same feeling about one other book by an Englishman, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*.

I came to know Mr. Whistler, the American painter, *poseur*, critic, writer and wit, through my connection with Mr. Heinemann. Heinemann was completely devoted to Whistler, helped him in his difficulties, metaphorically sat at his feet, and, I believe, at one time took Whistler to live with him. I don't know whether Whistler was capable of being devoted to anybody except himself, but he evidently appreciated Heinemann's admiration and devotion, which, to my knowledge, only once seemed to falter and to be replaced by acute irritation.

One day Heinemann said to me, "You have known Oscar Wilde; do you know Jimmy Whistler?"

"No," I said. "I have seen him, of course, but I've never been introduced to him."

"You must meet him," said Heinemann. "But don't write another skit—about *him*."

"Oh," I said, "don't be afraid. I'm no longer impudent. The

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years have chastened me. I don't say that I have learnt wisdom, but I hope I have shed a certain amount of folly."

"Was it folly to write *The Green Carnation*?" asked Heinemann, his eyes twinkling. "Was it folly on my part to publish it?"

"I leave you to decide on that. But I promise you not to write a skit on Mr. Whistler. If I did, probably there would be a repetition of the Ruskin scandal and I should come off second best."

"It seems that you have learnt wisdom," said Heinemann.

Shortly after this he invited me to dine with him to meet Whistler. And this invitation was subsequently twice repeated. Each time I was the only guest. For Whistler, I think, was living with Heinemann just then. He also invited me to a musical party, at which Whistler was present—and behaved very badly.

The three dinners, however, were very pleasant to me, and at them I played mainly the part of a listener.

Many people thought Whistler more brilliant even than Oscar Wilde, and there were several stories current about that, so well known that I need not repeat them.

When I first saw Oscar Wilde I thought, perhaps absurdly, that he looked rather like a very superior, amiable and successful conjurer. When I saw Mr. Whistler, not for the first time, at dinner with Heinemann I felt as if I was in the presence of an elderly magician; one who might put a spell on one if he cared to, or conjure up spirits from Limbo.

He was thin, elaborate, perky and piercing. His hair, with the white lock, seemed to have been arranged, or disarranged, by fantastic hands. His face was ravaged. His eyes were terribly lively and indeed looked actually fierce with intelligence. We didn't wear evening dress that first night, and I can't now remember how Whistler was dressed. But I do remember that his costume was anything rather than quiet, and that he wore a marvellous cravat large in size. He also carried a very thin stick or cane that looked like a wand, a magician's wand.

He received me with gaiety. I haven't the least idea what he thought of me. I think he probably looked upon me as mere material which he could drench with copious showers of conversation. He was evidently in tremendous spirits, and during the whole evening he directed the conversation in a masterly manner.

Heinemann was a good and copious talker, but Whistler, with the ease of genius, turned us both into happy, and even entranced listeners.

He was an admirable narrator, and could tell a long story with delicious art and any amount of comedy. He was very unexpected, and frequently startled you into irresistible laughter. Nimble was the word for him. He was nimble and even acrobatic.

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I have already dealt with Mr. Labouchere, who, when he talked, made nearly everything amusing and entertaining; and with Oscar Wilde, a Prince of talkers.

Whistler stood out, too, as a fascinating conversationalist. And to these I must add Sir Thomas Lipton, whom I first met and knew at Palermo in the house of the Whitakers, when he was travelling on his yacht with Princess Beatrice, and with whom, later on, I spent an afternoon at the Ritz Hotel in London, in the apartment of Mrs. Randolph Hearst, the wife of the famous American newspaper owner.

Sir Thomas was quite wonderfully funny in an Irish way, and seemed unable to open his mouth without saying something that almost forced you to laugh. But whereas he was obviously uneducated—he sometimes mispronounced quite ordinary words, calling, for instance, a chauffeur "a she-ofer"—Whistler was, I should think, highly educated, though never trying to show it.

Whistler's remarks were quoted all over London.

One that amused me very much was said at a Private View of the Royal Academy when I was there. I did not hear him say it, but it was repeated and many went away having heard of it.

Among the pictures shown was a large canvas by Burne-Jones called, I think, "The Depths of the Sea," and displaying mermaids at home in the watery element.

Whistler saw this and hurried away to a painter friend.

"Come!" he said, taking him by the sleeve. "Come with me! I must show you those unfortunate people in the tank!"

Whistler had a cruel wit and many of his arrows were barbed and went home. I should think he was a man without reverence. He may have had a heart but he certainly didn't wear it on his sleeve. But his beautiful portrait of his mother seems to suggest love for her.

The occasion when he irritated, and I think almost exasperated, his devoted friend Willy Heinemann, was connected with music.

Whether Whistler was musical or not I don't know. He never spoke about music when I dined in his company. But Heinemann invited him to a musical party. (This was when they were no longer living together, I believe.) And he came to it. I was asked too, and about thirty or forty other people. It took place in a charming apartment Heinemann had at that time, and it was given for a special reason. A young Danish 'cellist, in whom Queen Alexandra was interested, had arrived in London hoping to get known and to give some concerts. Heinemann knew him and, resolving to help him, gave this party to introduce him to a number of people strongly interested in music who might be trusted, if they liked his playing, to spread a good report of him through influential circles in London. We were told this by our host on arriving, and everything was done to produce a sympathetic atmosphere for the talented young foreigner.

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Whistler did his very best to spoil it.

When the music began he was sitting near me, by the side of a smart young woman who seemed very much interested in him and flattered by his "sitting in her pocket." Almost directly the 'cellist began to play Whistler began to talk, and he talked, I am sure deliberately, in a very audible voice. Not only that; by what he said he sent the girl he was with into frequent fits of laughter which she seemed unable to control and even unwilling to try to hide.

Poor Heinemann looked distracted by this behaviour. He even once or twice held up a hand, and a faint but desperate "Hush!" came from his lips.

But Whistler took no heed of him, and continued pouring forth conversation in a way that seemed to me definitely defiant. It suggested a determination to be the centre of attention and remark, and a cruel resolve to destroy the musical influence.

I was thoroughly disgusted by it, and wished that Heinemann would summon up the courage to stop the music for a moment and then ask for complete silence while the performance was going on. This might, perhaps, have prevailed over Whistler. I don't know. Anyhow, Heinemann didn't do it. And the contest between Whistler and the 'cellist went on. For me the evening was almost spoilt by my sorrow for the unfortunate young Dane. If Mrs. Asquith had been there I am sure she would have stood up to Whistler. When Maude Valérie White gave a private concert in her house she sat near the piano and wouldn't allow the least interruption to the music.

Whistler was charming to me. But when I met him at those little dinners I sat at his feet, realizing that was the way to get the best out of him. He was, I think, not merely conceited but also vain. Everything must centre round him.

Sir Edward Elgar, whom I was proud to know, as he was not easy to be at all intimate with, had a totally different type of character. Whistler was "showy," Sir Edward was reserved. Whistler demanded attention, Sir Edward seemed rather to avoid it when possible. Whistler looked like a magician, Sir Edward, I thought, looked like a retired military man, perhaps an Anglo-Indian major of a rather studious type.

He was very happily married to a wife who not only adored him but who believed passionately in his genius. They had one child, a daughter. When I knew them they lived in a beautiful house at Hampstead which had a very fine music-room. Several times I went to tea with them on Sundays and I had some meetings with Sir Edward alone. I also had supper with them after a concert at which much of Sir Edward's music was given, conducted by Sir Landon Ronald, with whom I had been at the Royal College of Music. Sir Landon was there that night, also Lady Maude Warrender, who,

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like her brother Lord Shaftesbury, was an accomplished musician and who had a fine contralto voice, and a few others. But we were not many. The Elgars, I think, had no great liking for crowds.

One day I dared to say to Sir Edward that I wished he could be moved to compose an opera. He said he would like to try that form of composition if he could come across a libretto that would inspire him. I asked him what sort of subject he would like to treat, and eventually he told me that he could imagine treating some such subject as I had written of in my *Garden of Allah*. About this time I received from America an operatic libretto drawn from *The Garden of Allah* by an American writer who was well known and had had a good deal of success. I read it with eagerness, but, though I'm not sure that I'm a good judge of a libretto, a very difficult literary form, I could not feel satisfied with this one. However, I took it to Sir Edward and asked him to look at it, without indicating my opinion of it.

A few days later he asked me to call on him. I went and he gave me back the libretto.

"Impossible!" he said. "Impossible! I couldn't write music to this."

He added after a moment, "Do *you* like it?"

"No," I said.

He looked relieved.

"Let's forget it!" he said.

He went to the grand piano, sat down at it, and began to play me from manuscript one of his latest compositions, while I turned over the leaves.

He never composed an opera because he never found a libretto he cared for, but he told me more than once that he would like to write an opera.

During the last war he wrote some very fine music to Laurence Binyon's poem "For the Fallen," and he played it to me in his music-room when we were quite alone there.

He was, I am sure, an exquisitely sensitive man. Two occurrences made me certain of this. One was particularly curious.

Lady Elgar and he invited me to accompany them to the Albert Hall to a concert for which they had a box. I went. Nothing unusual happened until a well-known and excellent pianist came on to the platform and sat down to play the piano part of Grieg's concerto for pianoforte and orchestra. Directly the first bars were audible Sir Edward, who was sitting beside me, got up, went to the back of the box, and remained standing there with his face to the wall. And he stayed there all the time the concerto was being played.

At first I thought he must be unwell, perhaps in physical pain, and that something ought to be done for him, and I looked questioningly at Lady Elgar.

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"Don't take any notice of him!" she whispered. "Don't say anything about it to him!"

Of course I obeyed her command. As soon as the concerto was over Sir Edward came back to his seat. I never found out the reason for his extraordinary conduct. But I concluded that he had his musical prejudices and that he must detest Grieg's composition.

I'm afraid that something I was responsible for hurt him, though he never said anything to me about it.

On the first night of the play *Bella Donna* at the St. James's Theatre, the then Duchess of Sutherland, Millicent, and Sir Edward were with me in a box. The most sensational act of the play takes place at night in a dahabeeyah on the Nile. Bella Donna's husband, Nigel, is being slowly poisoned by her with the connivance of her Egyptian lover, the poison being sugar of lead. Doctor Meyer Isaacson, Nigel's close friend, discovers this. While he is on the deck surreptitiously examining a cup of the poisoned coffee Bella Donna is in the saloon of the boat playing the piano. At the rehearsals I suggested to Mrs. Campbell that she should play a passage in Elgar's beautiful *Dream of Gerontius* in which the soul of a human being is dismissed to its maker. She liked the idea and carried it out in action. When the sound of the hidden piano was heard, coming from the lighted cabin and stealing out into the moonlight, I saw an expression almost of torture transform Sir Edward's face, and realized that I ought not to have used his wonderfully noble music for the attainment of such melodramatic ends. However, the thing was done. He never made the slightest allusion to this unfortunate occurrence, for which I felt very sorry. And Lady Elgar, who was devoted to him and watched over him with unceasing solicitude, made no change in her behaviour to me. She knew, of course, how very great my admiration for his music was, and he knew it too.

He was a composer of genius though he looked like an Anglo-Indian officer. The crowd love him for his *Land of Hope and Glory*; others of us place him high for his *Dream of Gerontius*, *The Apostles* and his symphonies. Once when Lady Elgar and I were talking about him, she told me something that interested me. She said that for a considerable time he seemed to be entirely idle. He wandered about vaguely, read very little, talked less, seemed to be uninterested in life, and worked not at all. She became anxious and said to him, "Why don't you do anything, Edward? Don't you feel well? What is it?"

He answered that he was quite well and told her not to worry about him.

"I am all right," he said.

At last, when she was becoming seriously upset about his unusual behaviour, he sat down again at his work-table and in less than five

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weeks composed the whole of one of his symphonies, or, rather, wrote it down and scored it, for evidently he had already composed it while he seemed to be doing nothing.

"After that," she added, "I never accused him again of being idle."

The scene of my book *A Spirit in Prison* was laid in and near Naples, with descriptions of life on the famous bay, which I knew well, and on a small island close to the coast of Posilipo. This island has since been bought by a Swiss acquaintance of mine, who often goes there in the summer. On the cliff close by, our former Ambassador in Rome, Lord Rennell, built himself a delightfully situated house, which I suppose still belongs to his family. While writing this long book I was very often in Naples and on the sea round the coast, and sometimes in the hot weather slept out in a boat under the stars. A rather curious thing happened in connection with the book which came to my knowledge a long while afterwards in London in this way.

I received one day when I was living in Jermyn Street a letter from an American stranger then staying in London. He wrote that he had found out my address and was anxious if possible to have an interview with me, as he had something to tell me which he believed must interest me. He added that it was connected with my *Spirit in Prison.*

Something in the simple and straightforward tone of the letter appealed to me and I answered it, asking him to call on me and fixing a time.

He came and proved to be quite young, not, I think, much over twenty-one or twenty-two, slight, eager and rather poetical-looking.

Just at first he seemed rather embarrassed, but I gave him tea, put him at his ease and presently said,

"Well, you have something to tell me, I believe. What is it?"

"It's about your book *A Spirit in Prison,*" he said.

"You have read it, then?"

"Yes. I read it in America and it led to a great change in my life. I was quite young and had never been in Europe. I lived out in the West, in the country. Your descriptions of the fishermen's life along the Bay of Naples fascinated me so much that I resolved to know it, to taste it for myself. This desire obsessed me so entirely that eventually I left my home, took passage on a ship, arrived in Europe and went straight to Naples, and on to Posilipo, to the very scene of your story."

He went on to tell me that he came quite alone, settled down in a lodging on the Bay, staying in a place entirely frequented by fisher folk, made acquaintance with them there, learned not only Italian but their dialect, made friends with them, lived as they did, became actually as one of them. In fact, he was transformed, as it were, into a fisher-boy on the Bay. He stayed a long time with them, some three or four years, I think, until he could speak their "lingo" so perfectly

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that sometimes he took visitors out in the boats and was accepted as a Southern Italian. He identified himself with them absolutely and they treated him as one of themselves in spite of his being an "Americano."

He proved that he was telling me the truth by talking to me in Italian with a perfect Neapolitan accent.

We became good friends and for a time I often saw him, and when I left London he wrote to me occasionally and sent me some manuscripts he had written to read. One was of a novel which was strange but decidedly unusual and interesting. The last time I heard from him he was living in Paris and had recently married.

I asked him why after living so long as a fisher-boy he had abandoned the life. He said his funds, which were very small, had given out. He had written home and his father had agreed to help him on condition that he returned to America. This he had done, but with keen regret, as he was enamoured of the life on the Bay. He now meant to make his way as a writer.

I wish I knew what has become of him, but, like some others, he has faded mysteriously out of my rather vagabond life. If he ever sees these lines and is still among the living, I wish he would write to me.

In the period of my life when I was often in Naples I made the acquaintance of Lady Haldon, who lived there with a lady companion. She was a friend of the then Duchess of Aosta, now the Dowager Duchess of Aosta, who was a Princess of France, the daughter of the late Comte de Paris, and sister of the late Duke of Orleans, the Pretender to the French throne. I had seen her when she was quite young, as she and her brother went out to Egypt on the same boat as myself when I paid the first of my many visits to Egypt.

One day Lady Haldon told me the Duchess would like to make my acquaintance as she had read several of my books. She lived in the palace at Capo di Monte above Naples. Naturally I said I should be honoured to know her, and eventually a day was fixed for me to go to the palace and lunch with Her Royal Highness in the company of Lady Haldon. Unfortunately, the day before we were going the Duke of Aosta was taken dangerously ill in Rome and the Duchess was called away from Naples by telegram.

Years passed away before we met. Then the meeting took place in an Arab palace at Sidi-Bou-Saïd near Tunis, where I was living at that time. Not in an Arab palace, though. That was the home of my kind neighbours, Baron and Baroness Rodolph d'Erlanger, to whom the Duchess was coming to spend the afternoon and to see their wonderful home. I was occupying another, smaller, but very attractive Oriental house, rented to me by the Baron, with my friends Mr. and Mrs. John Knittel and their family.

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We waited in the beautiful patio of the palace for the Royal arrival. A bell sounded in the distance, and the Baroness hurried off to greet her guests at the entrance. The Baron, who was very delicate and susceptible to cold, stayed with me.

After a minute or two we saw coming slowly towards us two astonishingly tall ladies, accompanied by Baroness d'Erlanger and two other people, a lady and a gentleman-in-waiting.

As the elder of the two ladies came up and was greeted by the Baron, who presented me, she smiled, held out her hand and said,

"At last! You remember—Naples?"

I said, "Yes indeed, Ma'am, and my great disappointment."

Then I was presented to the much younger lady, who was the Duchess's daughter-in-law, then Duchessa d'Aosta, for the former Duke of Aosta, who was taken suddenly ill while I was in Naples, was dead.

The Dowager Duchess, who was a great sportswoman and a first-rate shot, had arrived in Tunisia after a long journey in the depths of Africa shooting big game. As I sat beside her at tea I noticed how very remarkable her eyes were. They looked like eyes accustomed to gazing out intently over vast distances, searching—always searching for something.

"Eyes of Diana!" I thought.

Her Royal Highness has been a very great traveller both in Africa and in Asia, and has written a remarkable volume, copiously and beautifully illustrated, dealing with her journey through India. It is called *Vers le Soleil qui se Lève*, and is printed only for private circulation. She very graciously sent me a copy of it later on as a gift at Christmas, with some words written by herself in it in her characteristic very large handwriting. I added this to the library in my Swiss home at the edge of the forest above Maienfeld and Ragaz.

We talked at tea about her travels, the first journey to Egypt with her brother of Orleans on the ship I too sailed on. I told her I had seen her several times in Cairo, and on the Nile. Then we spoke of her home in Naples and she asked me to visit her there.

"To make up for the *déjeuner* you missed," she said.

While I write this I believe Her Royal Highness is still living in Capo di Monte. But her country is at war with mine, and her gallant and chivalrous soldier son, who was Viceroy of Ethiopia and taken prisoner by my countrymen, has died in exile far away from his wife, his family, his Italy.

I met him and made his acquaintance later on. But I will deal with that event, which took place in what seemed to be tragic circumstances, in a subsequent chapter. I had no idea during that meeting in Sidi-Bou-Saïd that eventually I should meet again several times his

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wife, the young Duchess, and even have the pleasure of introducing her to the Sphinx on a night of full moon. Coming events often do not cast their shadows before them.

A good while before the war of 1914-1918 I rented a cottage close to the sea at Tankerton, just outside the oyster town of Whitstable on Sea, about which Mr. Somerset Maugham has written so interestingly in more than one of his books, and I often went there from London from Fridays till Mondays. My frequent and long visits to Broadway in Worcestershire were during the years before this.

Owing to my close friendship with Maude Valérie White and Mr. and Mrs.—always called "Madam" in the village—de Navarro, I had usually a delightful time in Broadway. Although Madame de Navarro chose to live in the country, and clung with intense affection to her beautiful home there, she was anything rather than an anchorite. To the end of her long life she loved and enjoyed the society of interesting, talented, gay and important people. She was brimful of *joie de vivre* and had almost a genius for friendship. And "Tony," her husband, in spite of the Spanish melancholy that occasionally overpowered him for a time, was eminently fitted to shine at her side, though with a softer ray than hers.

These two together made Broadway a centre of social joy, which was increased by the presence and gifts of Maude Valérie White, and in which I was allowed to take part.

All sorts of people came to stay, or merely to pay lunch-and-tea visits, at Court Farm; Royalties, aristocrats, writers, musicians, actors and actresses, painters—and priests. For the Navarros were ardent Roman Catholics, and had a private chapel in their house where they heard mass, and "Tony" every year went to Rome, where he spent some weeks as an official at the Vatican Palace.

In their house I met for the first time Father Leonard, the head of the Passionist Monastery near by, who became a dear and greatly valued friend of mine, although I was not a Catholic. And there I met also several times Abbot, afterwards Cardinal, Gasquet, a deeply learned man, who was also a brilliant and very amusing talker; and who might be called a holy *homme du monde* although he was a priest. And there I met too dear Father Maturin, whose photograph is always with me, and whom I hold in my memory as perhaps the most utterly sincere human being I have ever met. He was drowned when the *Lusitania* went down.

I met, also, Sir John Hare, the great comedian, with his beautiful wife; Lady Dean Paul, the gifted composer and pianist; Lord and Lady Elcho, afterwards Lord and Lady Wemyss; the Redesdales, whose country place was not very far off; the Scotts—Lady Sackville's enemies; Edward Sothern, the actor beloved of America, and his wife Julia Marlowe, sometimes called "America's Ellen Terry";

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Marion Terry, the Bancrofts, Harry Irving, Frank Millet and Alfred Parsons the painters, Marie Corelli, Madame Suggia who plays so wonderfully on the 'cello and who has been painted by Augustus John, and the remarkable Julia Wedgwood, whose cottage near Stanway, the Elchos' place, was decorated and made wonderful by John Sargent, her devoted friend. And eventually, while staying at Broadway, I met Mr. Balfour, afterwards Earl Balfour.

As most people probably know, Lord Balfour was devoted to music. He was a great friend of Lord and Lady Elcho, and very often stayed with them at Stanway, their place near Broadway. He knew Maude Valérie White and the Navarros well and rejoiced in their musical talents. For "Tony" had a charming voice and sang admirably, and Madame de Navarro had a really splendid singing voice, which, however, she used very seldom. Sometimes, however, after dinner she and her husband would sit together on a sofa, play on guitars, and sing duets that were quite enchanting, especially when they gave us some of the melodies of the American negroes which they both sang inimitably.

A gift for music was apparently inherent in Madame de Navarro's family, for her handsome sister, Blanche Griffin, who afterwards married Herman Herkomer, the portrait-painter, had also a fine voice and was for a time a professional singer. And it was really to her and Maude Valérie White that I owed my meeting with Mr. Balfour.

It was in the winter, I think, or possibly very late autumn, when I happened to be in Broadway, that Mr. Balfour was staying at Stanway, alone in the house, as it happened, with Lady Wemyss. Blanche Griffin and Maude Valérie White were both in Broadway also. The Navarros were, I think, away on a visit. With Maude Valérie White was staying a young nephew, almost a boy.

Lady Wemyss—or Lady Elcho, as I think she was then—sent an invitation to us four, Maude, Blanche Griffin, the young nephew and me, asking us to dine with her and Mr. Balfour at Stanway, and begged Maude and Miss Griffin to bring "plenty of music."

We drove to Stanway, and, though I believe it must have been a not very warm night, I omitted to take an overcoat.

When we got there we found Lady Elcho and Mr. Balfour alone.

I had seen Mr. Balfour at the House of Commons, and had once heard him make a big speech at the Albert Hall to the Conservative Party, but till that night I had never spoken to him. And when I was introduced to him I felt rather anxious. After dinner would Lady Elcho and her two women guests leave me and the boy-nephew alone in the dining-room with Mr. Balfour? If she did, how should we get on with him? I couldn't help hoping that we should all leave the dining-room together.

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But it turned out otherwise. When dinner was over the three women got up and left us.

"Now for it!" I thought. "What's going to happen? Will the famous statesman be bored to death with us?"

I was no politician. Nor was I a philosopher. I had not at that time even read his *The Foundations of Belief.*

He came over and sat down beside me, between me and the nephew.

During dinner the conversation had been what is called "general," but among us had been one of the most animated and impulsive and natural talkers I have encountered in my long pilgrimage through life. This was—need I say it?—dear Maude Valérie White. Wherever she was you might be sure that the conversational ball would be kept rolling. She invariably had a quite marvellous amount to say, and moreover she said it well, often brilliantly.

Lady Elcho was an exceedingly charming and sympathetic but, when I knew her, a quiet woman. She gave me the impression, perhaps wrongly, that life had dealt rather hardly with her. Blanche Griffin had listened more than she had talked. I had not "put" myself "forward." Mr. Balfour had been very agreeable but not at all ostentatious. He had, however, a great deal of natural charm and could be, I noticed, an excellent listener.

Now evidently he meant to play host to me and the boy as he sat between us.

I forget how the conversation was started, but I remember that presently we were talking about authors, first the Russians and then about the French. At that time I had been taking big doses of Balzac. (I made this evident to many readers in my book *Felix.*) In fact, for a long time I was almost obsessed by Balzac, as no doubt many ambitious and still fairly young authors must have been, and perhaps still are. We discussed some of his books, while the boy listened. And presently I spoke of two of his short stories, one "Une Passion dans le Désert," and the other a terrible tale, of a woman who allowed her lover to be walled up by her husband in a cupboard in her bedroom rather than acknowledge that she had been unfaithful while her husband had been out of the house. And rather than betray her the lover made no sign of his presence but allowed himself to be done to death.

When I alluded to this story, which I had recently been reading, Mr. Balfour did not remember it, and he asked me to relate it to him. This I began to do, but after I had gone a little way in my narrative he suddenly put a hand on my arm and his forehead wrinkled in a frown.

"Please don't go on!" he said. "I can't stand it. I begin to remember that story. Too horrible! I don't like reading of horrible things. No, no! Let's forget it!"

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And he immediately changed the theme of our conversation. There was no pose about this. Quite evidently the mere remembrance of the story had upset him. This little incident gave me the impression that he was a highly sensitive man.

We soon went into the drawing-room, and the rest of the evening was devoted to music, which he sincerely loved. Maude White played delightfully and Blanche Griffin sang several of her songs. They even sang a duet together, for Maude had a thread of voice and knew how to use it. Recently she had composed a beautiful "Benedictus," which I still hold in my memory. And Mr. Balfour cared for it as much as I did.

When later the car was at the door he came out into the hall to see us off. The night was then rather cold and he said to me,

"Where is your overcoat?"

I said I had forgotten to bring one. He seemed almost shocked and said,

"I shall lend you one of mine."

I protested that I didn't need it. But he went to fetch it, brought it and made me wear it, helping me to put it on.

"I'm coming over to Broadway in a day or two," he said. "And then I'll retrieve it."

A very charming trait, this solicitude, in a great man. Needless to say how much I appreciated it.

Unfortunately, when he did retrieve his coat I had left Broadway, and I did not meet him again.

Among those who from time to time came to stay with me when I had a home—rented only—at Broadway were Consuelo Duchess of Manchester, Miss Marion Terry, Mr. H. B. Irving the remarkable actor-son of Sir Henry Irving, and Mr. Alexander Yorke whom I have already referred to; besides some of my own people, my father, mother and sisters, and my cousin by marriage, Mrs. Andrew Hichens, afterwards Lady Tennyson.

Mr. Yorke was a very entertaining guest. He was a thorough courtier, but he was more than that. If he had not been one, and instead of giving up most of his life to his duties at Court had decided to go on the stage, he would certainly have had a brilliant career as an actor.

In appearance he did not suggest an actor. A wanton wit once said to me, "Alec Yorke always reminds me of a slightly discontented guinea-pig." Nevertheless he really had quite astonishing histrionic powers, as Queen Victoria and Princess Beatrice knew very well. He got up amateur theatricals to please Queen Victoria, and acted in them with Princess Beatrice, once producing the comedy in which the Kendals and Sir John Hare acted so marvellously, called *A Scrap of Paper*.

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I only saw him act in a piece once, and that was at a delightful party given by Mr. and Mrs. Horner, afterwards Sir John and Lady Horner. This was an extraordinary occasion, for the great Miss Ada Rehan actually consented for once to appear in a private performance, persuaded to this, I believe, by her devoted friend, Lady Barrington, a cousin of Lady Horner's, and she chose Mr. Yorke to act with her. I went to this party and wrote an article about it for the *Westminster Gazette*, and I still remember an intensely funny scene in which Miss Rehan let herself loose in a wild piece of high comedy, while Mr. Yorke sat at her feet in concentrated silence, gazing up at her, while a series of astonished expressions gave the clue to what was going on in his agitated mind. It was supremely comic, though he had not a word to say until Miss Rehan had exhausted herself and at length he got in a murmur edgewise.

He was renowned at Court and in society for his imitations of well-known players, but till he stayed with me I had never seen them, and I should not have seen them then if it had not been for "Toty" de Navarro, the Navarros' only son, then a boy, now a learned Don at Cambridge.

Toty, to whom I could refuse nothing, implored me to persuade Mr. Yorke to show us what he had shown to Queen Victoria, and I asked him to be kind one night after dinner.

At first he refused, giving as a reason that he now had some false teeth and in consequence couldn't do himself justice.

I pointed out that the big drawing-room in Lady Maude Bowes-Lyon's house, in which he was staying with me, was specially adapted for a performance, as one end of it had a raised part gained by steps, on which he could appear alone while we sat at a lower level and looked up at him. In fact, it was a stage, though without footlights.

At last I persuaded him and the performance took place after dinner. Toty, of course, was present in a highly excited condition.

Mr. Yorke amazed us. It was at once evident that he had a genius for acting.

He began by imitating several well-known actors and actresses, in each case entirely sinking his own identity, though he had no properties and wore only his evening clothes.

He gave an astonishing suggestion of the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth*, awe-inspiring in its almost mystical melancholy and despair, and in response to the frantic applause of the tiny audience finished up with an imitation of Mr. Richard Mansfield, the American actor, in *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, taking, of course, the two parts of the physician who became the victim of his own awful experiment, and of the horrible ruffian whom, having evolved, he had finally lost control of.

This was wonderful. I shall never forget his abrupt transformation

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from the once fine and now despairing Jekyll into the abominable monster, seething with vileness, of Hyde. The effect was literally terrifying. Suddenly a species of dreadful, misshapen, dwarfish, almost goblin-like criminal was writhing and raging before us.

I feared that Toty, being only a young boy, would be overcome by the horror of this finale to the evening, but he was enthusiastic, and as Mr. Yorke came out of the likeness of Hyde, and wiped his brow delicately with a silk pocket-handkerchief, Toty turned to me and said in an emotional voice,

"Isn't Mr. Yorke *grand*!"

Alec Yorke told me, when Toty had retired to bed, that he had never received a compliment which had pleased him better.

"Not even from the Queen!" he added as an afterthought.

He had not only an intense veneration for Queen Victoria, but a deep love for her. Once when I asked him whether Her Majesty hadn't been rather a terrifying mistress he said,

"She was like a dear kind old mother to me!"

H. B. Irving, or as he was usually called Harry Irving, was an extremely interesting and unusual man, and I think the most absolutely, in all circumstances, self-possessed man whom I have ever met. I can't imagine that ever in his life he had had even a passing moment of shyness. He had a strong resemblance to his famous father, but was not so good-looking as Sir Henry, who had a face one could never forget. Harry was an excellent and accomplished actor but without the genius of his father. One realized that when, after Sir Henry's death, his son played two or three of the father's most famous parts. I saw both of them in *The Bells*, Sir Henry at least twenty times. Harry gave an excellent performance, but the magic which produced the cold shiver down one's back, the exquisite sensation of horror, the inner intimacy with the labouring conscience of the haunted murderer, was not there. Sir Henry's death scene was a supreme masterpiece of terrible acting which chilled the blood. Harry's was just a fine bit of acting.

Harry Irving was splendid company. I knew him well, as he had a country house at Whitstable near to my cottage at Tankerton, and often came to dine with me. I knew also his wife, the charming Dorothea Baird, and his two very attractive children. He was a very accomplished writer and produced more than one book dealing with criminology, a subject which he had studied deeply. A book of his that I found very interesting was called, I think, *Some French Criminals*. He belonged to one of my clubs, the Athenaeum, and I met him there now and then. But I saw most of him in Kent, and later on in Broadway.

One night at Tankerton when he was dining with me, my father and Harry Fielding, a great friend of mine from Canterbury, he told

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us that one afternoon he was sitting in a club with two men friends when a third man whom they knew came in fresh from hearing the trial of a man for murder. He stopped to tell them about the verdict, which had been "not guilty." While talking to them he said that he believed many people, if they searched their memories, could think of more than one person known to them who was suspected of being a murderer, though never charged with the crime.

After he had left them, Irving said, they discussed this and, to their surprise, found that what he had affirmed was true. I said I did not think I knew, or had known, any suspected, but unaccused, criminals of this type. Irving said,

"Think it well over, and when we next meet, tell me if you are still of the same mind."

I said that I would.

Some time after this he dined with me again and we were alone.

"Well," he said, "have you anything to tell me now?"

I had. In the meantime I had remembered three acquaintances thought by a good many people to be probably murderers. One was a woman. The others were men. The woman was believed by members of her late husband's family to have murdered him, though there was no evidence of it and she was never accused of it. Of the men, one was a doctor whom I had met several times at the beginning of my career in London, who was thought by some people to have murdered his wife, and who had been almost more than hinted at as her murderer. The third was a man whom I had met when travelling, whose wife had died in what were called "suspicious circumstances."

The case of the doctor was specially peculiar, for someone had written a book, purporting to be fiction, but which he had considered so obviously referred to him as the murderer of his wife that he had gone to a famous solicitor, laid the matter before him, said he must bring an action for criminal libel against the writer, and asked the solicitor to appear for him in his action.

To this appeal the solicitor had replied,

"I can't say yet whether I will act for you or not. Give me a week to think it over. Then come to me again and I'll give you my answer."

The doctor went away and came back in a week.

"Now will you act for me?" he said.

The solicitor replied, "You believe in me, I suppose, or you wouldn't have consulted me—would you?"

"Of course not."

"Then will you follow my carefully considered advice, after certain investigations I have made?"

"Yes, certainly. For such a case as mine you're the best solicitor in London."

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"Good! My advice to you is this: Don't bring any action."

No action was brought by the doctor.

Harry Irving came to me in Broadway to hear me read a play to him which I had written in collaboration with my Swiss friend John Knittel. It was an Indian play and I read it to him one Sunday afternoon. Marion Terry was staying with us at the time, and Sir John and Lady Hare were coming to tea. Irving liked the play so much that he actually bought the acting rights of it. John Knittel and I were delighted. When we went into the drawing-room Miss Terry and the Hares asked how things had gone and congratulated us.

But the play was never produced. Eventually Irving gave up the rights and we sold them again to someone else. We made £500 out of that play, but it has never been done, and will never be done now.

That is a fate shared by many plays.

Bernard Fagan gave me to read a drama of his called *The Singer of Shiraz*, which I thought very good and original, but that, too, was eventually laid on the shelf, and I have never heard anything more about it.

I am glad to write that since then John Knittel has had a great deal of success with his play, written alone, *Via Mala*, which has been acted many hundreds of times on the Continent. I was at the first performance of it in the Schauspielhaus in Zürich and it was received by the crowded audience with enthusiasm. The great German author, Herr Thomas Mann, and his wife were in the next box to ours. A day or two later Herr Mann wrote a letter to Knittel expressing his strong admiration for the play. Since then it has been acted in over forty cities on the Continent, including Munich, Vienna, Budapest, Hamburg, etc., and has never failed to draw crowded houses. Yet neither in England nor in America has it been accepted for production. It is an entirely Swiss play, containing a Swiss problem and Swiss characters. But it is so human, and so dramatic, that, if properly acted, I believe it must succeed anywhere.

A long chapter might be written on the fates of plays. Ours which was bought twice and never put on the stage was certainly seen by a great many people connected with the theatre. Several years after Irving and others had read it, an Indian play was produced and had great success. The story of it was in several respects extraordinarily like ours. I enjoy very much writing for the stage, though I have not given a very great deal of my time to it, but the putting of a play on the stage is sometimes an agonizing business. One often feels almost flayed at rehearsals, and later, when one hears the mistakes one has corrected again and again calmly repeated by the actors and actresses at public performances. In America, at rehearsal, the leading actress in *The Garden of Allah* persisted in saying "Maybe" instead of the "Perhaps" always written in the script. At last I said to her,

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"Miss So-and-so, there is not one 'Maybe'—not *one*—in the whole of the play. Could you very kindly remember that?"

"Oh, very well," she said, rather sulkily.

At the performances of the play which I attended in New York she said "Maybe" every time instead of the "Perhaps" I had written. This may seem a very small thing to bother about, but a conscientious writer, with "views," can't help bothering about every small detail. The audience may not notice mistakes, but he does.

Sometimes one has to wait a long time before a play produced with success in one country, or one continent, is given a chance in another. This happened in connection with Madame de Navarro's and my play, *The Garden of Allah*, produced in America before the war of 1914-1918. Although from the first performance it was financially an outstanding success, and this was, of course, known in London, it was not accepted for production there until several years later, until after the war was over and won. The reason for this was, as I found out eventually, owing mainly to the strong opposition put up against its acceptance by Mr. Arthur Collins, who was the Producer and almost the ruling power at the National Theatre of Drury Lane. He saw the play in New York and—his own expression, stated to me long afterwards—was "bored to tears" by it. "Finally," he said to me, "I fell fast asleep and didn't wake up till the last curtain came down."

This was hardly good hearing for a dramatist, but I could at least respect Arthur Collins's sincerity. And every man has a right to his own opinion.

We became, and remained, excellent friends. But that story's place is later on in this chronicle. I did not know Mr. Collins till the war had been fought out to the end, and lived to see all his predictions about the fate of *The Garden of Allah* in London falsified by events. A long and varied life, containing many experiences, happy and the reverse, has almost convinced me that the expert is nearly always wrong. Prophecies are usually futile. Once when I was staying in Marienbad with Sir Charles Wyndham, the famous comedian, manager, and owner of three London theatres, I talked about this with him, and he quite agreed with me. He said that probably he was as good a judge of a play as any man in London, but that he couldn't foresee what the public would "take to" and what they wouldn't have at any price.

And, to illustrate this, he told me that once he produced a play which he expected to be "a winner." Unfortunately, it was a failure. As he had nothing ready to follow it he went to his "pigeon-hole," as he called it, to look for "a stopgap" that might "tide him over" a few weeks while he was rehearsing something he really believed

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in. He chose a piece called *The Candidate*, rehearsed it quickly and put it on.

"I thought possibly I might keep the theatre open with it for six weeks," he said.

It proved to be one of his biggest successes and ran for hundreds of nights.

What is a great success in England is often a complete failure in New York. This happened, I believe, in the case of Emlyn Williams's fascinating play, *Night Must Fall*. I saw it several times in London and found it almost enthralling in its sinister force. In America, so I was told, it was a failure.

The Voice from the Minaret, which ran for months at the Globe Theatre in London to very large audiences, was torn to pieces by the American critics of New York and quickly withdrawn. And yet, as a rule, I have had more success in America than in my own country.

A notable exception to this, however, occurred when I brought out my book, *The Fruitful Vine*. It was so little appreciated by American readers that I gave back to my American publisher a thousand pounds of the four thousand pounds on account of royalties which he had paid to me for it on the day of publication, partially to compensate him for his loss on it.

XV

I WAS, as usual, in Sicily during the winter of 1913-1914. Taormina was crowded with people, including many from England, and the early spring season was specially gay. There was much dancing in the village, much entertaining in the villas and the hotels. Maude Valérie White was there, the Duke of Bronte, Lady Constance Combe and her pretty daughter, Miss Marjorie Combe, Lady Kimberley and her family, and ever so many others. Just before Christmas I made a dash from Taormina to Falmouth, to spend Christmas Day with my people, who had now settled there for my mother's health. Long before this my father's finances had fallen into confusion. He really had no conception how to manage the fortune his father had left him; he was perpetually giving money to all sorts of people who traded upon his well-known generosity, and had now only about a third part of his original capital left. This I finally succeeded in getting possession of and handing over to my mother to relieve her from anxiety, and until my father's death I provided him with an allowance so that he

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might feel independent. I never received the five hundred a year he had promised me after his death. He was too kind to those who came to him for money. He could not say "no," even when he must have known that the applicants were entirely undeserving. There are a good many like him. Sometimes they cause a great deal of trouble to those near and dear to them, but I prefer them to those who are mean and who "sit on" their money. They may not show "head," but at least they show heart.

I only stayed in England for a few days and then went back to Taormina. Though I did not know it, this was to be my last visit there. When in the late spring I left that most beautiful place I had no foreboding that, at any rate for twenty-nine years, and perhaps for ever, I should not see it again except now and then from the deck of a passing ship.

When the war of 1914-1918 broke out I was forty-nine, and nearing my fiftieth year. It was full summer and I was spending some time in my seaside cottage at Tankerton, with the intention of as usual going abroad for the late autumn and winter. But the Sicilian phase of my life was over, and a new era was opening out before me. With the changing of the world my life was going to be completely changed, and in a way that I had never dreamed of as possible.

I have no intention of dwelling in any great detail on what has been called "the Great War." As I write these memories we are all plunged in another and even more horrible conflict. And what I did in the 1914-1918 war was by no means heroic and far from interesting.

As the war found me by chance in Tankerton I considered it my duty at first to do what I could to be of some small use there. And therefore on the day the corps of Special Constables was organized I joined it. I also joined the newly formed fire-brigade, and sat on committees concerned with defence in case of invasion.

A call very soon came for motor-cars to be put at the disposition of the Military, and I journeyed up to London and offered my Austin car for the use of the soldiers. The offer was accepted, and that was almost the last of the car as far as I was concerned. For it was very soon taken over for purposes connected with the army, and when the war was ended it had been so much damaged that I never used it again. My Sicilian chauffeur, who had been in my employment for a great many years, was summoned to Italy to serve in the Italian navy. His health was wrecked by his experiences at sea, and when peace came at last he was an invalid and has never recovered his health, though he was not wounded. Both my brothers served in the war. They, too, were not wounded though often in imminent danger, especially my brother Arthur, who was for a time in the Dardanelles

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and perpetually under fire. But they, too, both lost their health owing to the hardships they underwent. My youngest brother never recovered and eventually died when by no means old. My brother Arthur is still alive but has for years been a semi-invalid.

While I remained at Tankerton my loneliness there was mitigated by the frequent presence of my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Spender, who came down nearly every week for two or three nights from London, as Mrs. Spender was running a hospital there for wounded and ill soldiers, and, when he could spare the time from his work in London, her husband helped her in the organization of it. They were both devoted workers, and I was glad to contribute something to aid in the finances, and often visited the patients. In the evenings, when the Spenders had time, we would meet in my cottage or in the lodgings they had taken, perhaps dining together, and Alfred would tell us many interesting facts connected with the running of the war by the Government in London. He knew intimately all the most prominent Ministers, and was a great and trusted friend of the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith. He also knew very well Admiral "Jackie" Fisher, perhaps the greatest "character" in politics at that time, and told us many amusing stories of him while the wintry sea was moaning along the flat shore just beyond my cottage garden.

Often at the end of our talk I was obliged to go on duty as a special constable, either from ten in the night until two a.m. or perhaps from midnight till four, or from two a.m. until six. But it was a great solace to me in the life I led at that time to have the friendship of the Spenders, and I became very much attached to both of them. Alfred was a splendid character, as well as an exceedingly clever and highly educated man, and Mrs. Spender won my heart by her devotion to the welfare of the suffering soldiers.

Now and then someone came to stay with me for a few nights. I remember that my younger sister, Millie, came. While she was with me we had an experience which excited us.

It was a very still night with a clear sky. My sister went to bed about half-past ten. I sat up rather later, and before following her example went out into the little garden in front of the cottage and stood by the fence looking up at the stars.

Suddenly I saw, among them as it seemed to me, a strange phenomenon which attracted my attention. It looked like a golden fish travelling slowly inland from the sea among the constellations. I stared at it for a moment in amazement, wondering what it might be. Then understanding came to me. I hurried indoors and knocked on the door of my sister's bedroom.

"Come out quickly!" I called to her. "There's a Zeppelin passing over us!"

In a moment she came out, wrapped in a dressing-gown, and stood

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with me by the fence, and we saw the golden fish gliding onward towards Chatham until it faded away from us in the night.

Then, soon, came the sinister sound of dull and heavy explosions. The war in the air had begun.

I was in many air-raids during the war and never saw any signs of panic except once, when a woman whom I knew, and who was dining, as I was, in the grill-room of the Savoy Hotel, entirely lost all self-control and tried to rush out of the hotel into the court where shrapnel was falling. A man stopped her just in time.

After spending many months at Tankerton I transferred to London, joined the Special Constabulary there, and took up my quarters in Savoy Court. There I had a long sitting-room with a bow-window which faced towards the Thames Embankment. One night, soon after I had gone to bed, I heard a loud noise of aircraft passing apparently directly over the hotel. I jumped up, ran into my sitting-room, foolishly opened a segment of the bow-window and leaned out, prompted no doubt purely by curiosity. As I did this there was a tremendous explosion and the hotel for an instant seemed to shake. I found out afterwards that a bomb had fallen on an omnibus passing on the Embankment below my window. Many people in it were killed. On that one occasion I was conscious of a sharp sensation of horror and fear. But usually people caught in an air-raid seemed thrilled by excitement and curiosity rather than overcome by terror. Several times during air-raids I was in the company of women friends, and none of them seemed afraid, although we were not hiding in air-raid shelters. But of course the air-raids in the war that is going on while I write this are incomparably more frightful than any of those in the last war.

I served in the Special Constabulary for slightly over three years. There was absolutely nothing heroic or exciting about it. It was simply a boring job, in which elderly men inapt for army service could make themselves useful. In London my beat lay in the heart of the West End. I was often in Bond Street, in Jermyn Street, in St. James's Street, in Grosvenor Square. I "guarded," for instance, the American Embassy, in which Mr. Page, the Ambassador, and Mrs. Page, both of whom I knew, were installed. I hope they appreciated my watch and ward over their precious lives. They were true friends of England and delightful people to meet.

Once when I was walking solemnly to and fro with a comrade on the pavement of Grosvenor Square, Mrs. John Jacob Astor, later Lady Ribblesdale, who lived there, kindly sent out a footman to inquire whether when my time of duty was over I would come in to lunch. I was obliged reluctantly to answer that I should not be free for such pleasures until three hours more had elapsed.

During my long stay in London I was at last given a few weeks'

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leave of absence. I spent them in a way that some friends of mine thought quite crazy. Although the submarine war was being waged in the Mediterranean I managed to get across to Algeria and to pass the best part of my holiday in Biskra. I was accompanied by two friends, Mrs. Barclay and her son "Sandy," a young officer who had been forced to give up active service in the army by a bad bicycle accident. Kind Lady Ripon managed to get us permission to travel in French territory, and we had some wonderful days in the peace and sunshine of El Kantara, Biskra and Algiers.

On our last day but one in North Africa we lunched with the Admiral of the Port in Algiers, and he scolded us gently for having ventured to come there in wartime, and told us that on the previous day a German submarine had been cruising near the mouth of the harbour.

This news was not very encouraging, for we were forced to sail on the morrow. The luck, however, was with us. On the following day a gale sprang up, and became so violent towards evening, when we put out to sea, that we were troubled by nothing except by the agonies of acute sea-sickness.

We reached Marseilles more than twelve hours late and journeyed to Paris, which we found deep in snow. There Mrs. Barclay and her son said goodbye to me and went off to England, and I stayed on for the final couple of days of my leave.

During that short time a rather queer thing befell me, which fortified my belief that there are people in this world who have now and then the strange faculty of peering into the future.

Just after the Barclays had left me, when I was walking alone in the Rue Royale, I saw a large advertisement which stated that somebody called "Fabro" received clients for hand-reading, crystal-gazing and foreknowledge at an address in the Rue Royale. The number given was close to where I was standing to read the advertisement, and, having nothing special to do, I decided to pay Fabro a visit. I knew, of course, absolutely nothing about him.

I went to the address given. It was an apartment house of flats. Fabro's card in the narrow hall told me that he dwelt on the third floor. I mounted to the third floor and rang a bell. After a pause I rang a second time. A moment passed: then the door was opened, and I was confronted by a strange-looking, rather old humpbacked man, with a nearly white beard and enormous very pale eyes which stared at me with intentness.

"Are you Fabro?" I asked in French.

"Yes," the man answered. "Do you wish to see me?"

He spoke in French with a foreign accent.

I answered that I had seen his advertisement and would like to consult him.

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He did not seem particularly pleased to have me as a client, and continued to examine me with his large pale eyes for a moment. Then he said, as if reluctantly, "Entrez!"

I stepped in and he showed me into a sitting-room on the right of his hall door. Two or three birds were at liberty in it. A large cage with an open door stood on a centre table near a plant growing in a pot.

Fabro said, "Please sit down."

Then he left me alone with the perching and fluttering birds.

I sat down and waited for a time that seemed to me long. My reception had been rather grim. Nothing of the smiling welcome of the money-making charlatan about it. I felt that I must expect no compliments from this small humpbacked man.

At last he came back, went at once to a little oval table with a cushion on it near the window, and beckoned to me to come to a chair at one side of it. I came, sat down; he sat down opposite to me and said, "Commençons-nous!"

I shall not attempt to repeat here most of what he said to me in his own words. I do not remember them. But I remember clearly much of the gist of his talk.

He never told me that I was a writer. But he did say that I worked in one of the arts, and added that no doubt I thought I had been very successful in it.

"*You* think so!" he said. "But *I* say that you ought to have done much better work than you have accomplished."

And he declared, almost with brutality, that I had allowed people to influence me in my work to its detriment, instead of following always, and only, my own guiding instincts. He positively attacked me for this, and even seemed angry with me.

I listened without saying a word.

He then described my character—I think with accuracy. Finally we came to what interested me most, and what has made me write of this interview.

He told me that in a very short time, and while the war was still on, I was going to change my way of living completely, and to live as I had never yet lived and had never thought to live.

"How?" I asked.

He then asserted that I had been for a long time living alone, that I was not married, and that I had a mania for what I thought of as my "freedom."

"Isn't that so?" he said.

As he asked me the question I remembered a remark made by Father Leonard, the Passionist Monk at Broadway, a great friend of mine, to Madame de Navarro, which she had repeated to me. He had said of me to her,

"Poor Roberto! He's the slave of his freedom!"

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Perhaps he was right.

"It may be," I said to Fabro. "But then am I going to marry?"

He shook his head.

I asked him what the great change in my way of living was going to be. What could it have to do with my supposed mania for freedom?

He answered that very soon, and quite unexpectedly, I was going to meet someone, or some people, whom I did not yet know and had never even seen. Owing to this meeting I should entirely change my way of living. I should do it of my own volition. I should wish to do it. My life would be utterly changed.

I asked him if this changed way of living would last long.

He said yes, for a very long time, probably for years.

I could not imagine how this transformation of my life could come about, or what exactly its nature could be. But his convinced manner impressed me very much.

Another thing that happened surprised me.

At the beginning of our conversation, after speaking French, Fabro had looked at me very hard and then said, "You speak Italian!"

I said in French, "How can you possibly know that?"

He said, "I do know it."

And he told me that he was Italian and would now address me in Italian. And for the rest of our time together he spoke Italian.

At that time I could speak Italian about as well as French. Now I have so little opportunity of speaking it that such Italian as I once knew must, I fear, be getting very "rusty."

When I had paid Fabro, and was on the point of going away, I asked him how he had known that I understood Italian. He only said, "I know many things."

I never saw him again, but as I went away down the Rue Royale in the snow I knew I should never forget him. What he had said to me about having been too much influenced by the opinions of others in connection with my work, and having in consequence done work less good than I might have done had I trusted entirely to myself, remained in my mind. I resolved in future to try to be completely independent in mind when writing for publication. As to the rest of what he had said, I could not make anything of it. How could a casual meeting with a stranger, or strangers, cause me entirely to change my manner of living, not merely for a short time but for years?

I left Paris and went back to resume my tedious life as a Special Constable in the London streets, feeling almost convinced that Fabro's prophecy for me had been a futile shot in the dark that would find no target.

If I didn't marry, how could my freedom—as I thought of it—be permanently interfered with, unless indeed I were to be sentenced to a term of imprisonment? And that didn't seem to be very likely.

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About this time I began to be plagued by insomnia, from which I had never suffered before, except during one or two attacks of illness. I attributed this to the fact that during the many months of my sojourn in Tankerton at the beginning of the war I had often been obliged to be on duty at all hours of the night. Every twenty-four hours I had had four hours of police duty, and these hours had taken me all round the clock. Sometimes I had been out at night, watching by bridges or railway lines, from ten until two, from eleven until three, from twelve until four, and so on. My sleep had been continually interfered with. In London it was different. There I was usually on duty in daytime, though I was liable to be called out at night if aircraft were expected or anything unusual occurred. Yet it was in London that I began to be bothered by insomnia.

At first I treated it lightly, as something that would soon pass away. But though my life in London was full of variety, and I saw many people, and was comfortable in my Savoy Court apartment, I began to feel often very depressed. But this I put down to the war-darkness of London and to the lengthening out of the war.

I became very busy at this time, for the Princess Marie Louise, Princess Christian's younger daughter, whom I had the honour and pleasure of knowing, asked me to help her to get up a great charity matinée at one of the big London theatres for the benefit of the wounded soldiers. Naturally I agreed to do this, and the preparations and arrangements for this benefit took up an immense amount of Her Highness's time and of mine.

The Princess was a very hard and persistent worker in all good causes, as I knew well from one or two experiences in the past, and as her heart was set on making this charity matinée one of the most successful ever held in London, we were both obliged to get, and to keep on being, busy.

As there had been already many charity matinées for war purposes, I told Her Highness that we ought to try to obtain the help of some Star that had not been twinkling too lately before the eyes of the public. She quite agreed, but said, "I can't think of one. Can you?"

"Yes, Ma'am," I said. "The beautiful Mary Anderson."

"But she's long ago left the stage for ever!"

"Shall I try to get her to return to it, in the part of Galatea in W. S. Gilbert's famous play, just for one afternoon? If I succeed I think we should draw all London."

"And perhaps we might even charge five guineas apiece for the front rows of stalls!" said Her Highness. "How splendid! Do ask her!"

Well, I did ask her and she accepted. We were lent His Majesty's Theatre, and we sold five rows of stalls at five guineas apiece. Nearly all the Royalties in London attended, and I had the task of receiving

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them all alone at the Royal entrance and conducting them into the theatre. Queen Alexandra was the last to arrive with Princess Victoria.

As the statue that came to life Mary Anderson looked lovely and startlingly young, and acted as if she had only left the stage on the previous night instead of more years ago than I can remember. The soldiers presented her with a beautiful bouquet, all the Royalties welcomed her back in the Royal waiting-room, and she was cheered by the crowds in the street outside the theatre.

When it was over I walked away alone to the flat I was then occupying for a time in St. James's Street. It had been a prodigious success. We had secured a really great sum of money for the soldiers. It had been an interesting and, for me, an unusual afternoon. But I remember that I felt very depressed and nervously exhausted.

I spent that evening alone in my flat. During it I remembered the curious and, as I had thought at the time it was uttered, ridiculous prophecy that had been made to me perhaps thirty years ago. The woman who made it had told me that she saw me in a room surrounded by Royalties, I being almost the only person who was not a Royalty there. Yes, I had thought it ridiculous. And yet that day it had been proved to be true. For at His Majesty's Theatre I had been obliged to receive all the Royalties who came to our matinée, and had been with them in the Royal waiting-room for some time before they had gone to their seats in the boxes and auditorium.

One prophecy true!

What of the prophecy of Fabro about the great change in my way of life? Would that come true also? I wondered vaguely.

Soon after our matinée, while I was still sleeping badly and often feeling very tired but was living my usual active life, I received one day an invitation.

It came from an American film company which had a branch office in London. I had sold to this company the right to make a film founded on *The Garden of Allah*. The film had been made in America and had been sent over to London, and the manager of the company in London now invited me to fix a time for a private view of it in the miniature cinema theatre attached to their office. Nobody would be there but myself unless I wished to bring a friend with me.

I resolved to go alone, and wrote to fix an hour on the following afternoon for the private view.

At the hour I had suggested I went to the company's offices, and found myself in a large room in which were several stenographers, both girls and men, busily working. On a raised platform behind a desk at the far end of this room, facing the door by which I had entered, I saw a tall, clean-shaven young man, with very thick hair and a robust frame, sitting, apparently presiding over the workers.

He looked up, saw me, got up immediately and came towards me.

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"Can I do anything for you, please?" he asked.

"Well," I said, "my name's Robert Hichens, and I've had this invitation to see a private view of the film of my *Garden of Allah*."

My answer seemed to interest him. He looked at me—I might say "looked me over"—eagerly and asked me to come at once with him to the theatre, saying, "I'll have it shown to you immediately. Our chief isn't here at the moment, but he's sure to come in very soon."

So saying, he led me away to the little theatre, and called the operator to give me a show of the film of my story.

On that afternoon I met for the first time the man with whom, with whose wife, and later on with whose family, I was destined to live for certainly twenty-five years, and with whom I am still closely connected at the time of writing. His name, he informed me, was John Knittel and he belonged to the Swiss nation though born in British India.

I had never heard of him till that day. He spoke English well though his native language was German, as his father was a citizen of Basel.

While the film was being shown he sat beside me, and during the pauses which came occasionally between scenes talked to me with great animation. Obviously he was a very live wire indeed. And yet there was something in his appearance which suggested to me that there might be some delicacy lurking in him.

The main impression I got from him, however, and it was exceedingly strong, was that this was a young man in whom some very powerful agent was housed, an agent which had not yet been released, but was, almost mysteriously, held captive there in durance. I had no idea then what was the nature of this inhabitant.

When the showing of the film was nearly over, the head of the office arrived with another man. (John Knittel, I understood, was in the position of manager under him.) I was introduced to him by Knittel and we saw the finale of the film together. Then we had a talk. I gave him my impressions of the film, and was told that in a few days it would be shown again to a specially invited audience in the small theatre, and, before it was released to the general public, would be given before a larger audience in one of the cinema houses. Meanwhile the head of the office asked me, if I had any communications to make or suggestions to offer, to apply to Mr. Knittel, in whom he had every confidence.

We parted, and I went back to Savoy Court, aware that I had met a new acquaintance who had made upon me an unusually strong impression.

Subsequent meetings with John Knittel increased this impression. I saw him in the office about the performance of the film to a limited number of people and arranged with him how many I wished to

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bring with me to it. Then I asked him to dine with me at the Savoy Hotel grill-room. There we had for the first time an intimate talk, and he told me something about himself.

I learned about his life and beginnings in London, at the Crédit Lyonnais, how he had come to the office of the film company to reorganize matters in the main office. He told me that he was married and expected very soon to be a father. And finally he told me that his most real and persistent longing was to become what I already was, a writer. In fact, he was haunted by the desire which had once haunted me—the desire to devote himself to the terrible career.

Now a very great many people "want to write," and many of them, it seems, have no real ability for the job, no creative faculty. I knew that. I had known it long ago when I was a pupil in the London School of Journalism. Here was another who "wanted to write." It would have been natural enough if I had shrugged my shoulders over Knittel's aspirations, and felt inclined to advise him to stick to the business life for which evidently he had an aptitude.

But I didn't shrug my shoulders. On the contrary, I thought to myself,

"Now I know what sort of inmate is housed in this man, and I'm inclined to believe it's an inmate worth cultivating, worth attending to."

I believed, in fact, from the very beginning of my acquaintance with John Knittel, that his ambition was justified and must not be laughed at. I was even convinced of this, and my conviction persisted.

Yet whatever he had written in secret I didn't see, and if I had seen it I couldn't have understood it, for it was written in German, a language I had never learnt.

We arranged about the date for the private showing of *The Garden of Allah* film.

It took place. I brought with me to it some friends who had lunched with me beforehand: among them Maude Valérie White, Miss Gladys Deacon, who eventually became the Duchess of Marlborough, a remarkably brilliant and beautiful American girl, and several others. Sir Alexander Hood was there with his sister Mrs. Evans. And for the first time I saw the girl who was shortly to enter, and to remain in my life, and to whom one of my latest novels is dedicated, Frances Knittel, John Knittel's wife.

A day or two later I went to their house and made her acquaintance. I saw her again at the more public showing of the film in a cinema house, to which I took Miss Irene Vanbrugh, one of our very finest actresses, as she proved in Pinero's *Gay Lord Quex* and many other comedies and dramas.

The Garden of Allah was filmed again twice, and two of the three

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films of it were silent. The third was a talking film in colour. I liked best the second film, directed by Rex Ingram, some parts of which I saw rehearsed at Stouëli in North Africa, on the spot where the scene of the Trappist Monk's departure from, and return to, the Monastery took place. This was in the depths of the country, but not very far from Algiers. In the story I transferred it to a district near Tunis. But the descriptions in the book were of Stouëli.

Not long after the beginning of my friendship with the Knittels, and the charity performance at His Majesty's Theatre, my insomnia increased so much, and had such a bad effect on my general health, that I was on the verge of a complete nervous breakdown. I tried by various means to overcome it, and was even hypnotized, as well as given drugs, but nothing effected a cure. I woke every night about two o'clock and had no more sleep. In consequence acute melancholy set in, and at night I began to have palpitations of the heart.

At last, in despair, I consulted a famous nerve specialist. He examined me and told me that I must give up all work and get out of London as soon as possible.

"Go to Brighton," he said, "and stay there as long as you can. But don't expect to be cured in a hurry. This may be a long business."

I took his advice, resigned from the Special Constables, left London and went to a well-known hotel at Brighton facing the sea.

Before going there it had come to my knowledge that John Knittel, though he looked robust and was full of animation, was not really well, and that London life did not suit him. As his work lay there, he was, as it were, trying to force London to suit him. But he acknowledged to me that he was not well and sometimes feared he would never be well in the sedentary existence he was obliged to lead in London. His wife by this time had given birth to a baby, a girl, now a dear friend of mine, who has a baby son of her own. I suggested that all three of them should come down to Brighton while I was there and keep me company.

In my melancholy and even morbid condition, brought about by long-continued sleeplessness, I was beginning to depend on them in a quite extraordinary way. I knew very few people in Brighton, and none intimately, and longed for their friendly companionship. After some persuasion they decided to come, and they arrived with the baby and two nurses.

Why two? I asked, and was told that the baby's nurse flatly refused to come unless her friend, the other nurse, accompanied her. As Mrs. Knittel was not very strong, and depended on this demanding nurse, she gave in, and thus there were two of them.

At first the party of five went into lodgings, but presently the two nurses, working together, became so intolerable that they were got rid of and the Knittels moved into my hotel. John, of course, con-

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tinued his work in London, going up there every morning by the breakfast train and returning at night in time for dinner. His health, however, did not improve, and I soon arrived at the conviction, which I kept to myself for some time, that he would never be well unless he gave up his London life, at any rate for a time.

During all the weekdays Mrs. Knittel and I and the baby were left to ourselves, and occasionally, after my morning's work, I went out with them for a walk along the front, and it is on record that I even wheeled Doreen in her perambulator, and on one occasion, while doing so, met the Duchess of Marlborough, afterwards Madame Balzan, with her younger son, and received from her a bow which expressed amazement. Afterwards I went to lunch with her and both her sons in a house she had rented, and explained that the baby she had seen in the perambulator was not my own child.

"Then you are a real altruist!" she commented.

During my prolonged stay in Brighton I met a few people whom I knew: Mr. Stephen Powys, Sir Hubert Miller, Frank Schuster, Lord (formerly Mr. Bobbie) Spencer and Lord Astor.

The last named was living in solitude in a large house, which looked rather like a miniature fortress, and which I believe he had had built to his order, by the great promenade facing the sea. While I was in Brighton I lunched three times in this house alone with him.

Lord Astor was an interesting, highly cultivated and original man, with very strong views and I should think an extremely strong, perhaps even overbearing will. He could act promptly when he decided on anything. He proved this when he suddenly terminated Mr. Harry Cust's connection with the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which he owned, and replaced him, and I believe almost the whole of his staff, with another set of men. He wrote well, and occasionally contributed to his magazine in which I had written, the *Pall Mall Magazine*. I enjoyed my three lunches with him, although they were not seasoned with either gaiety or very much humour.

Lord Astor at that time seemed to me a rather sad and disillusioned man. Although formerly he had entertained almost royally in London, having Monsieur Paderewski to play to his guests, and other musical stars, he had apparently withdrawn altogether from society. He gave me the impression that probably this withdrawal had been caused by the fact that he was enormously rich and known to be so. Once after lunch he complained to me that when in London he was perpetually being run after for his money. He told me that he liked to help many worthy charities, and also to give to many worthy people individually whom he knew to be in need. But, he said,

"One gets to hate being looked upon merely as a money-bag."

And he told me that even when he was at parties, and was trying

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to have a pleasant time, women used to come up to him and try to get him to contribute to what he described as "their pet schemes."

"I got sick of it," he said. "I like to be allowed to give away money in ways that I choose for myself. I don't like to be dunned for money in public."

In a book that I wrote not very long ago called *The Million* I did not actually draw Lord Astor, but in an American banker's character I drew on my memory of him.

He was a kind host, agreeable and not overpowering, and conversation with him ran easily. But he was certainly not a happy man.

Lord Spencer came to Brighton for his health, and lived at the Hotel Metropole in a suite containing an enormous sitting-room in which I had tea with him. He was all alone there and seemed very depressed. I had met him first at my uncle's house in Guilsborough, where he was "Mr. Bobbie Spencer," very lively and amusing. I knew slightly both his sisters, Lady Sarah and Lady Sandhurst. The latter was one of the most truly musical women to be found in London and had, I should think, a blithe spirit. Lady Sarah Spencer had the charm of transparent goodness, integrity and high-mindedness. She was, I am sure, one of the "salt of the earth." Such people are rare, and she struck me as rare. Miss Warrender, who founded a yearly prize to encourage English poets, and whom I met later on at the house of Lady Randolph Churchill, reminded me of her, not in appearance, but in her atmosphere of quiet and unobtrusive distinction and what I felt to be her character.

Returning for a moment to the case of Lord Astor. When I was in Rome I met several times, and talked to, Mr. Pierpont Morgan, the great American banker. He made upon me a strong impression of force, domination and power; but he did not make an impression of being at all a happy man. Two outstanding millionaires, one formerly American but who had become an English Peer, the other always an American and, I suppose, the greatest financial magnate of the United States, and both entirely devoid of the unmistakable impress of happiness. Recently in Zürich a very well known and successful banker whom I know said to me,

"I'm beginning to think perhaps it's better to have no possessions at all."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because then you don't keep on worrying for fear of losing them!" he said, with an accent of heartfelt sincerity.

I found out afterwards that he had just had the news that a beautiful house he had built and decorated in a foreign country had been razed to the ground, in order to prepare for the possible invasion of Europe by the Allied armies.

My conviction that John's health would never be thoroughly

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restored if he continued to work in London, joined to my belief in his hidden talent for writing, and my desire for his and his wife's company led me at last to a rather tentative suggestion that he should resign his situation as manager in the cinema office and come, of course with his wife and baby, to live with me in the country for a time.

John had sketched for me an idea he had for a play, which I thought good. We might get to work on that. In the country we should probably be safer from air-raids than in Brighton. And if the scheme were not a success we could return to our former separate ways of life. John was optimistically convinced that, if necessary, he could always find work in London again.

After much consideration and debate the Knittels agreed to fall in with my suggestion, and while he still went on working in London I set about the search for a country house which we could rent for a few months. On Saturday afternoons and on Sundays I was joined in my search by the Knittels and eventually we decided on a house called Bankton in Sussex, not far from East Grinstead.

Soon after Christmas we entered into possession of it, and we stayed there for several months, and our rather startling scheme succeeded so well that the Knittels and I have been closely connected together ever since that long-ago time, and John, like myself, has concentrated on authorship.

In Bankton he started on his original work as a writer, to my great surprise writing in English like Joseph Conrad. He began a long struggle in an extremely arduous and difficult career. Success did not come to him quickly, but when it did come it was great, and so far has proved to be lasting. The sales of his books, *Via Mala*, *Doctor Ibrahim*, *Thérèse Etienne*, and others, are enormous, and continue from year to year, and promise to be quite as successful in French and Italian as they are in German. His books are also published in America. He has, too, a great name in Scandinavia.

His plays, one of which, a stage version of *Via Mala*, has been produced on the Continent in over two hundred cities with constant success, he writes in German.

Lord Northcliffe personally reviewed his first novel in the *Times Literary Supplement*.

So much for my friend. And now to return to a less attractive topic, my persistent insomnia.

As neither doctor nor hypnotist could cure me, in desperation I decided to try and cure myself. The astonishing thing is that I succeeded; and without either drugs or hypnotism.

One morning, after an almost entirely sleepless night, I said to John, "I can't stand this any longer. I'm going to try a horse cure for my insomnia."

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He asked me what on earth I meant.

I said that when I was young I had ridden a great deal and loved it. I would buy some saddle-horses and start riding again. And he should ride with me.

So said—so done.

Through a woman friend, a great lover of that noble animal the horse, I purchased three saddle-horses, engaged a middle-aged Sussex groom, hired a stable close to my house, and one night, accompanied by John, went to the nearest station to welcome my (hoped-for) saviours.

It was a winter night, very cold and dark. Our groom stood beside me on the small platform, looking rather grim but expectant.

"Hope they'll be good 'uns, sir."

To reassure him I told him that Countess Bubna, the lady who had chosen and bought the horses for me, was a first-rate judge of horse-flesh. I knew this, for once, when we had been together to some races near Como, she had picked out four successive winners after seeing the horses walk round in the paddock.

A grunt seemed to suggest that our groom had a very small opinion of women as judges of horse-flesh.

At last the train came in with the horse-boxes. John and I, full of keen expectation, stood by them while the doors were opened. There was a clatter of hooves in the darkness and then cautiously the three horses were brought out. One was a very big and powerful-looking white horse with a particularly strong neck. Then came a grey mare, which seemed nervous and, I thought, had a rather foolish demeanour. The third horse, much smaller, was a strawberry roan, very well shaped, a high stepper, with eyes that in the dim lamplight looked feverish.

The stable was very near to the station. Naturally we went to see the horses fed and bedded down. This done, we returned to the house.

At that time John had very little experience of horses. Now he is an excellent, and I might almost say a passionate, horseman, a lover of the horse if ever there has been one. I had ridden a great deal, but not for a good many years. How were we going to get on with these new acquisitions? That question was, I believe, in both our minds as we sat down to dinner that night.

Before going to bed I intimated that we must go for our first ride together the following afternoon. John agreed. We fixed half-past two as the time for starting.

Exactly at half-past two on the following day our parlour-maid came into the room where we were waiting in top-boots and riding kit, and announced,

"The horses are here, sir."

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Now for it!

We went out to the front door. In the drive stood the big white horse and the grey mare held by the groom, who seemed, I thought, rather proud of his charges.

John, I think of his own accord, made for the white horse, leaving the mare for me. We mounted and slowly rode down the short drive to the gate, the groom, in his leggings, marching critically behind us.

When we had passed through the gate this is what happened. John's horse bolted at a gallop down the road to the left, and my mare at first refused to budge, and when I insisted began to turn rapidly round and round in small circles. In vain I endeavoured to persuade her to follow her comrade, who had now disappeared in the distance. Her obstinacy matched her folly. And she was still turning round and round when galloping hooves rang once more on the hard high-road, and John reappeared at a gallop, passed us at full speed, and disappeared again in the distance, but this time in the opposite direction from that which he had taken on starting.

My mare fortunately now took it into her head to change what I suppose I must call her mind, and I was able to follow John, though at a moderate pace. We overtook him at last in the depths of Sussex, and managed to keep together for a couple of hours. Fortunately John has what I lack, a remarkable sense of direction, and though we were entirely unacquainted with the country round our new home we got back to it in time for tea, feeling rather tired but decidedly pleased with ourselves.

We were met by the groom, whose short side-whiskers seemed to me to bristle with the comment on our proceedings which he did not express in words.

"Will you be riding again tomorrow, sir?" he inquired.

"Yes," I said firmly. "We mean to ride every day at the same hour."

He then asked me what we would do about the roan.

"You must exercise him," I said.

It seemed to me that John and I had better get accustomed to our animals before embarking on fresh experiences in the saddle. Besides, I intended to drive the roan as well as to ride him eventually, as he was a very high stepper and accustomed to being driven. And I had bought carriage harness and a four-wheeled dogcart from Countess Bubna, and expected their arrival almost directly. Meanwhile we would stick to, and I hoped also stick on to, the white horse and the grey mare.

So our riding began. The horses selected for us were not perfect. The big white horse was tremendously strong and in perfect condition, but he was a persistent puller with a very hard mouth, and when he let himself out, as he often did eventually in a gallop, it was almost

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impossible to pull him in. The mare, on the other hand, though sound enough, was silly. She shied rather frequently, but she was not vicious and her paces were not bad.

The roan was a fine little horse and I not only drove him but rode him frequently. He was too small really for John. He had a marvellous action and looked "showy," especially when he was driven in the smart yellow-and-black four-wheeled dogcart which soon arrived with a set of first-rate harness, which, however, presently made me feel rather foolish. (I will tell you why later on.) But he once did something which upset me, and someone else more than me. He fell—I never knew why: perhaps he crossed his legs—when a very celebrated man was riding him for the first time. But that was when I had moved into Surrey. At present we are still in Sussex.

In spite of the fact that we were in deep winter, John and I stuck to our plan of riding every afternoon, in bad weather as well as in good, and we became gradually accustomed to our steeds and at home with them.

One day during a ride in a new direction I saw on the left a lovely red road, leading towards a landscape that looked tempting. I perceived no notice warning me that this road was on private property, and without hesitation we took it. After perhaps ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, descending among the trees of a coppice we arrived at a short span of flat ground beyond which, always on this red earth, rose gradually a long hill. That day I was riding the white horse, and John the mare. Directly my horse was on the flat and saw the hill in front of him he pricked up his ears and broke into a gallop. The mare followed his example and we had a rousing burst of speed which set the blood in our veins tingling. When we reached the brow of the hill, gradually I got complete control of my hard-mouthed mount, and pulled him at last into a walk.

"We must come this way often," I said. "The riding here is first-rate."

John quite agreed, and we presently turned our horses' heads homewards in the best of spirits. But when we reached at length the end of the red road—or roads, for others branched off from the main one which we had taken—to my horror I saw a notice-board stuck up announcing that all this property was strictly private and that trespassers thereon would be prosecuted.

"No more gallops on the lovely red road!" we thought.

But presently, meeting someone on the way, I asked to whom the big property we had been trespassing on belonged.

"To Lord Cowdray," was the reply.

Now it happened that I knew Lord and Lady Cowdray, though not intimately. Still, I knew them, had dined at their London house, and had been with them more than once when I was in New York,

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where they stayed, as I did, in the St. Regis Hotel. A plan occurred to me.

"I'll write to Lord Cowdray tonight and apologize," I said to John Knittel. "Perhaps—!"

I did not finish the sentence. With John that wasn't necessary. He is very quick in the uptake.

"Perhaps—!" he ejaculated.

When we reached home I sat down to write my note.

In it I said that I had taken a house near Lord Cowdray's place and by accident had trespassed, with a friend, on his ground. I begged his pardon, but added that, being on horseback, we had been tempted by the red road invitingly laid out before us. Now that I knew this was private, of course I should never trespass on it again. I sent my best regards to Lady Cowdray and ended with renewed apologies.

By return of post I had a letter from Lord Cowdray saying that my friend and I could ride on his property whenever we wanted to, and adding an invitation to lunch.

We thanked him warmly, accepted the lunch, and during the whole time we remained in occupation of Bankton enjoyed glorious rides on the red roads.

The Cowdrays were exceedingly kind to us.

John very soon began to show a marked aptitude for horsemanship, and I had no difficulty in once again feeling at home in the saddle. Almost every day of the week, except now and then when we had to go up to London, we rode, and were usually out for two hours and a half. In six weeks my insomnia was entirely conquered and I felt like a different man. But the irregularity of my heart persisted for a longer time and bothered me occasionally. Our Brighton friend, Doctor Nicholson, an excellent physician whom I had called in when I was more or less invalided there, and who came more than once to stay with us in Sussex, assured me that I had only "a nervous heart," which would yield in time to a thoroughly healthy life. He proved to be right. Eventually my heart became normal again and it does not trouble me now.

Our life at Bankton was a quiet and regular one. John and I worked during the whole of the morning, rode in the afternoon, sometimes worked again before dinner, and as a rule went to bed early. Two or three times we made riding tours, and on two or three occasions covered forty miles in a day.

The baby girl prospered and Mrs. Knittel settled down to a country life happily, although she had been born and had lived mostly in London. Now and then we had visitors. Her sister, Isabelle, came to us, Maude Valérie White and a few others. But we had little company as a rule, and did not miss it.

Often I thought of the prophecy of Fabro in Paris. I was now

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fulfilling it. My life was utterly changed. I was living *en famille*, and actually with a baby in my house. What had seemed the incredible was accomplished. The question whether it could last did not trouble me. I had forgotten what Fabro's number in the Rue Royale was, so I never wrote to tell him that he was a "Seer." I have never seen him again.

After a few months of Bankton we decided to give it up and to go elsewhere for the summer. John and I made riding trips to find another house that would suit us, and eventually settled on a delightful dwelling called Highmead in Surrey, in perfect riding country, not far from the famous Frensham Ponds. Mrs. Knittel, the baby and the servants travelled there by train. John and I rode there. And our groom drove the roan over. But not the groom with the side-whiskers. He played us false and we had to let him go. He may have understood horses but he did not know how to behave himself. However, the history of his misdoings is not interesting. We had trouble with other servants, of course, as well as with the Sussex groom, but I doubt if we were more unfortunate than most people. There was one rather absurd incident connected with another groom, but that occurred later on in our family life.

Our new home at Highmead delighted us. The house was a charming one and situated in beautiful country, close to great stretches of land called "commons" which were splendid for riding. There was a fascinating garden, at the bottom of which ran a stream in which we often bathed. There was a velvety croquet-lawn and a first-rate lawn-tennis court. And the garden was edged with forest, tenanted by squirrels. John and I sometimes slept in this under the stars. Bankton was a pleasant house and had a good garden, but Highmead pleased me, and I think all of us, much more. It belonged to people who evidently had very good taste, for the furniture was not only comfortable but individual, and enticed one to the life of indoors, though this enticement was combated by the green summer that reigned without. I was fond of Highmead.

We had only been there for two or three days when on returning from a gallop with John upon one of the commons, I was told by a servant that "a gentleman" had called, had said he was a friend of mine, and had asked for me. He lived somewhere near by.

Wondering who this could be, as I had believed, and had indeed hoped, that I knew no one in the neighbourhood, I asked who the "gentleman" was.

The servant gave me a card. On it was the name of W. Somerset Maugham.

On reading this name I was not only relieved but delighted. I had met Mr. Maugham more than once in London but did not know him

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well. I was a great admirer of his plays and his stories. Here was a chance, perhaps, of getting to know him better. On the card was his address in Surrey. He was living in a place called Charles Hill Court, very near Highmead, which he had rented furnished for the summer. His health, like mine, had stopped him for a time from active work. His wife and small daughter were with him.

I found this out when I returned his call. We were near neighbours for the whole of the summer and saw each other continually.

I was at that time exceedingly fond of lawn-tennis. But we played croquet too, and the Maughams were croquet players. We had many matches at croquet with them. One I specially remember. It took place in the Maughams' garden. I played with Mrs. Maugham against Frances Knittel and Somerset Maugham. It was such a close game that it became painfully exciting. We were all at the last stick at the same time. Mrs. Maugham and I were beaten.

Very soon after my first meeting in Surrey with Maugham I asked him whether he ever rode, or had ridden. He answered, I remember, that in the course of a long and varied life he had ridden all sorts of beasts in many countries. As we had three saddle-horses, I asked him whether he would care now and then to ride with John and me. He said he would like nothing better. After that we turned the grey mare over to him, I usually mounted the roan, and John had the big white "puller." Throughout the summer we had many delightful rides together, sometimes interrupted by excellent teas at the Frensham Ponds Hotel.

Somerset Maugham was at that time in a delicate state of health, and even had to spend more than one winter in a clinique up in the north. But he never complained and was always good company. His wife and he dined with us more than once and we went to them. John mixed us astonishing summer drinks, distinctly alcoholic. Sometimes after dinner we had music.

One evening, when Maude Valérie White was with us, Maugham told us he was writing a play laid in Egypt, and wanted some music suggesting an Oriental singing on the Nile. He and Maude spent a long time together at the piano, and Maude played to him music which had been suggested to her by a sojourn in Egypt. The play was called *Caesar's Wife*. I saw it in London later on, where it had a great deal of success.

One unfortunate incident broke for me the pleasant spell of this Surrey summer. A play of mine was produced by Anthony Prinsep at his Globe Theatre in London and was a total failure.

I had written a drama called *The Voice from the Minaret*, which Mr. Prinsep had accepted and intended to produce during the war, but his manager, who had been at His Majesty's Theatre with Beerbohm Tree, advised him to wait till times were better, and meanwhile

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to produce something lighter. The management asked me if I had anything "up my sleeve." It happened that I had a farce which I had called *Their Own Devices*. I gave it to them to read, saying that I did not think much of it. They read it and immediately accepted it, and seemed delighted with it. I remember the manager saying to me, "You are much too modest about it. It's just the thing for us."

Well, he was wrong. It wasn't at all the thing, and it had a run of about nine performances. Charles Hawtrey rehearsed it. He hated it and was very disagreeable to me, although previously we had been quite good acquaintances. On the night of its production I heard one of the audience, a woman, say to her male companion, "Isn't it absolute rubbish? But I dare say it'll go. Any nonsense seems good enough for an audience in wartime!"

It didn't go. It stopped. And I returned in a chastened mood to Highmead.

Somerset Maugham was very nice about my failure. He never alluded to it, or gave me a hint that he was aware of it.

I was rather afraid that after this experience the Globe people would shrink from producing *The Voice from the Minaret*. But later on they did produce it, with Miss Marie Lohr in the principal part, and it was a great success. In fact, the audiences that thronged to see it were so great that Mr. Prinsep was warned by the police against "over-crowding" his theatre.

One day John was away in London and Somerset Maugham and I decided to ride together without him. I have already written that the rather feverish fidgety roan which I often rode had on one occasion fallen unexpectedly when a very celebrated man was on his back. This man was unfortunately Somerset Maugham, who was an excellent horseman. Thinking that perhaps he would like a change from the grey mare for once, I asked him whether he would care to try the paces of the roan. He said he would. We mounted and set off together, he on the roan, and I on the white horse. It was a hot summer's day, and we were trotting quietly along the high-road deep in an interesting conversation, when the roan suddenly crashed to the ground, inevitably throwing his rider. Maugham's forehead struck the road and blood came. It was a really dangerous fall. Perhaps the roan trod on a loose stone, or perhaps for once he crossed his legs. Luckily he got up without kicking his rider and stood still. Maugham was rather badly hurt and a bump began to appear where he had hit the road. I forget what we did, but I know that we both sat for some minutes by the side of the road, waiting till Maugham, who had been nearly stunned, recovered enough to remount. He behaved like a stoic, made no complaint, and presently said he was ready to get on the animal which had treated him so badly, and which he was holding by the reins.

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We of course made for his house at once, and I left him in the care of Mrs. Maugham, making many apologies for my horse. Then I rode back to Highmead leading the roan.

A few days later the Maughams had promised to dine with us. I didn't expect them to come, as I heard that Maugham's forehead was badly swollen, but they turned up and we spent quite a pleasant evening together. Maugham made light of the whole thing and didn't seem to care at all about his changed appearance. I have never known a man make less of a nasty accident than he did.

Any horse may put a foot wrong now and then. I was violently thrown one day in the desert near my house in Egypt, when a powerful brown horse that I rode every day suddenly fell on his head and flung me on to the sand. And one of the most famous riders in England, Bay Middleton, who had been chosen by the Empress of Austria to be her "lead" when she hunted in England, and whom I had met at the house of my Uncle Sikes at Guilsborough, was killed when his horse, which was cantering across a field, put its foot in a rabbit-hole. He was pitched over its head and broke his neck.

Maugham recovered quickly, and we had many more rides together before the summer was over and we went our different ways, he to a clinique in the north, the Knittels and I to Lady Maude Lyon's house in Broadway which I had rented again for a term.

Before this departure, however, we had some very pleasant times in our Surrey home.

My cousin Andrew's wife, May, had after his death married Lord Tennyson, and they were living within motoring distance of us at her beautiful property on the Hog's Back called Monk's Hatch. We drove over one day to spend the afternoon with them, and also visited Mrs. Watts, the second wife of the great painter G. F. Watts, who was still living in the house on my cousin's property in which Watts, before his death, had lived and worked near the village made notable by the picture gallery he founded there, and the mortuary chapel decorated by his widow.

The Tennysons took a great liking to my friends the Knittels, and hearing that John was fond of sport they gave him permission, when the shooting season began, to shoot over the Monk's Hatch property as often as he liked. They would not be there then as they were going to another property that belonged to Lord Tennyson. John was overjoyed at this offer, and before we gave up Highmead he had several afternoons among the pheasants and partridges, and also on one occasion shot an owl by accident, and caused a certain amount of havoc among the rabbits.

While at Highmead he and I collaborated on the play we called *The Star of Lahore*.

One evening, hearing that *Bella Donna* was being produced at the

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Aldershot theatre, we drove over to see it, and secluded ourselves in a box. The acting unfortunately did not send us into ecstasies, and I became anxious to slip away at the end without the company knowing I was there. But somehow the manager found it out and asked me to go behind the scenes to meet the actors and actresses. This was an awkward moment, but I got through it somehow without, I hope, creating any bad blood.

While we were still at Highmead we had a narrow escape. To get to the dining-room we had to pass along a short corridor which had a rather elaborate ornamental ceiling. We often heard the guns going like fury when we went to bed at night, and probably, though such a long way off, the explosives had an effect on our house, though we had not realized it. At any rate, one day just after luncheon, when we had all only a few moments before passed through this corridor, the whole of the ceiling came down with a crash.

Before we decided on our winter plans, as Monk's Hatch was going to be empty for the winter months, I asked May Tennyson if she and Lord Tennyson felt inclined to let it to me, as we had all taken a great liking to it. They seemed disposed to agree to this plan, and the matter was almost settled, when we had a message to say that "owing to unforeseen circumstances" they couldn't agree to it. This led to my eventually deciding to rent again Lady Maude Lyon's house at Broadway.

At the beginning of November we had to leave Highmead, as the owners were coming back to it, and we departed to Cornwall to spend a few days at Falmouth, where my father, mother and elder sister were living, having given up Canterbury.

When we got to Truro we received a surprise. A guard put his head in at the window and said, "Do you know that hostilities ceased today at two o'clock?"

We could scarcely believe it, but when we got to Falmouth the news was confirmed. On the following day, however, the newspapers denied it and we were plunged in depression. This was on November the 8th. But on November the 11th, when I was dressing and looking out of the window at the collection of shipping in Falmouth Bay, I heard a terrific blowing of sirens and steam whistles announcing that Peace really had come.

Directly after breakfast the Knittels and I went out with the intention of walking into town to see how the Cornishmen would celebrate the historic event.

I need not describe that celebration as there was nothing very original or striking about it, but on our way down the hill from "the residential quarter" of Falmouth we witnessed a small, strictly private

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celebration which was exquisitely English and which amused us all, especially John.

We came to a semi-detached suburban villa, all the windows of which were shut. Nevertheless we were able from the road to see into a small sitting-room on the left of the front door. As we approached this the figure of a short middle-aged man, with a rather red and very solemn face and a large moustache of the walrus type, became visible, moving slowly forward to the bow-window. Beneath the walrus moustache protruded an unlit briar pipe, and in the short man's left hand there was something being carried with great, almost reverent care.

As the carrier reached the bow-window we saw that this object was a minute Union Jack.

The bells went on ringing. The man cautiously opened the window and put the Union Jack outside. We then saw that a long piece of string was attached to it.

This he hauled gravely up over the top of the window, which he proceeded to shut, leaving the minute flag outside held up by the string, a length of which was now tucked away safely inside the sitting-room. He then remained for a moment solemnly observing his handiwork, and listening no doubt to the bells.

Finally, evidently satisfied with his celebration of his country's great and historic victory, he struck a match, lit his pipe, drew away from the window and sat down, apparently in an easy-chair drawn up before a hidden fire. We then saw only the back of his middle-aged head.

"England! England!" I murmured, touched and half laughing.

And we walked on to witness the Cornishmen throwing confetti.

By the kind permission of Her Highness, Princess Marie Louise, I am able to interpolate here a few details of my association with her which led to our co-operation in getting up the extremely successful matinée at His Majesty's Theatre in which Madame de Navarro reappeared on the stage after many years of retirement.

Before that happy occasion, I had had several opportunities of seeing Her Highness hard at work for many good causes, had visited a hospital to which she had given her patronage, and in which she spent a great deal of time ministering to and cheering up wounded and sick soldiers, and had seen at close quarters manifestations of her vital interest in the work of the Church Army to which that remarkable man, Prebendary Carlile, devoted the major part of his astonishing energies.

A great many English people, I am sure, would be surprised if they knew how much hard, and of course always unpaid, work the ladies of the English Royal Family get through in the course of the year. And one of the most active of these is Princess Marie Louise.

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I met her first in society and soon realized how many-sided she was. A traveller in many lands, a lover of sea voyages, a writer—she has published more than one book—greatly interested in art, an ardent "theatregoer," a good public speaker, a capital conversationalist, a dancer, she never allows her pleasures to get in the way of her charitable enterprises. Good work first—good company second, when the work is over! Her days are filled up to the brim. But now and then, as we all must, she relaxes, and I have often seen her at the theatre and the opera, and on summer afternoons at the Wimbledon Tournament, following with eager interest the contests of champion tennis-players.

When I helped Her Highness for several weeks in preparations for the matinée at His Majesty's Theatre I became acquainted with her business acumen, which sometimes seemed based on optimism. We had to do with Sir Beerbohm Tree's very astute business manager, and consulted him about what prices we could venture to demand of the public for seats to see Madame de Navarro in *Pygmalion and Galatea.*

The Princess, as she confided to me, was set upon charging as much as five guineas each for the front-row stalls. Tree's manager threw very cold water upon this suggestion.

"You won't get it, Madam," he said. "The public has had so many charity matinées already that they'll never pay such a price. I've had years in the theatre business, and, believe me, you can't ask five guineas a seat to see anyone."

"But—the soldiers! Remember the soldiers."

"Not even for the wounded soldiers, Madam!"

No conclusion was come to that day, but when we left the theatre for a hasty lunch before going to a rehearsal the Princess told me she was positive the manager was wrong, and that she was determined to have "a good try" to sell some seats at five guineas each.

"If they don't sell, we can put down the price."

But they did sell, five rows of them, and Tree's manager had to confess that the Princess knew more about the British Public than he did.

During one summer when I had a house in Broadway, Worcestershire, Lady Bective, whom I had known and greatly liked for many years, asked me to go up to her house, Lunefield, in Westmorland, to meet Princess Marie Louise, who would be staying there to open a bazaar, got up by Lady Bective's daughter, Lady Henry Bentinck, who lived at Underley, a beautiful place near Lunefield, which had been Lady Bective's home until the death of her husband, Lord Bective. I went, and there I got to know Her Highness better, and realized how deeply interested she was in the condition of the London poor. During a long walk on the moors, after a tea at Underley, she told me about the wonderful work Prebendary Carlile was doing in connection with

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the Church Army, asked me whether I knew him, and when I said that I didn't, told me that as soon as we were both back again in London I must come down one Sunday to attend the service in Prebendary Carlile's church, and see for myself what a lot of good he was doing. I promised, of course, to come, and eventually on a Sunday in winter I received the expected invitation, which was not only for the Sunday service but for tea at the building in connection with the church beforehand, and for a preliminary promenade in the streets of London adjoining the mission.

I wondered a good deal what this preliminary promenade was for, and what it would bring forth.

On the appointed Sunday I journeyed down East in a pious and expectant frame of mind, was cordially received by the Prebendary, who, though a clergyman, had, I thought, a decidedly military look, well suited to the head of an army, even though it were a Church Army, and conducted to a small plainly furnished room, I think an upper room, where I found Her Highness already established, with Lady Zetland, like myself a newcomer in those precincts, and her lady-in-waiting, who was, I think, at that time Miss Hawkes, whom I already knew well.

We sat round the tea-table and were given very good tea, bread and butter and a plain cake. Prebendary Carlile did not preside. He had other things to do, I suppose, in connection with the coming service, but he waited till tea had been brought in and then said to the Princess, "Now, Madam, if you wish it I'll go and fetch him."

I had noticed that there was an extra place at our table, and had naturally supposed till that moment that it was meant for the Prebendary.

The Princess assented to the suggestion made to her, and our host went out of the room.

As soon as he had gone the Princess told me that he had gone to fetch "one of his criminals."

Rather startled by this unexpected announcement, I said, "A criminal, Ma'am! And you asked him to tea?"

The Princess, evidently amused at my amazement, explained that Prebendary Carlile had rescued many so-called evil-doers from their misspent lives and, by his influence and understanding, had turned them into good citizens.

"He tells me," she added, "that the man who will join us in a moment was one of the worst cases he has had to do with, was for many years in and out of prison, but is now an excellent fellow and one of the firmest props of his church here."

Just as she finished speaking the door opened and a middle-aged man with white hair and moustache, neatly dressed in dark clothes, with a white collar and black bow tie, came in.

This, incredibly, as it seemed to me, was the former "criminal."

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With simple self-possession, quite unperturbed, and with a sort of natural, unselfconscious dignity, he bowed before the Princess, who shook hands with him, was introduced to us and cordially greeted, sat down and had his tea with us.

I can't at this distance of time remember details of the conversation which followed, but I do remember that everything went well, without hitch or awkwardness of any kind, and I also remember that the rescued man spoke with ardent warmth of the goodness and sympathy of the Head of the Church Army.

So polite, so simply at his ease, so sincere in manner and words was the newcomer that I found it almost impossible to believe that he had ever been a criminal and had spent—as he had—many years in prisons.

Tea ended, he took his leave of us, announcing that before very long the evening service would begin and that he must go and "get ready" for it.

We all got up from the tea-table and the Princess said to me that now was the time for the preliminary promenade.

"But what is that, Ma'am?" I asked. "I'm quite in the dark."

At this moment Prebendary Carlile came in, wearing a surplice and carrying a species of trombone.

I learned from him that we were to go out into the streets near the church, buttonhole any "likely people" we might meet in them, and —not compel them to come in, but if possible persuade them to be present at the evening service. After speaking to the Princess he took me aside, and asked me to accompany her and to see that nothing disagreeable occurred to her. But he added he was quite sure nothing would. Still, Her Highness must of course have someone with her.

We then fared forth on our curious errand. The Princess showed an adventurous spirit, and nothing untoward happened, but I must relate one little episode which amused me very much at the time, and which we often laughed about afterwards.

Presently, while we were in a street near the church, spreading the news of the coming service to passers-by, we saw an elderly, badly dressed, very common looking man, with a suspiciously red nose, advancing towards us, I feel convinced in search of a public house, or perhaps of a "pal," who would be ready and able to stand him a drink.

Directly she saw him the Princess said,

"That's the sort of man Mr. Carlile wants to get hold of. I'll tackle him. Leave him to me."

She then went up to the red-nosed wanderer and stopped him. A short dialogue ensued, during which the Princess spoke persuasively of the service which would begin almost immediately, of the music to be heard at it, of the many people who would be there, of the communal singing, etc. The man listened to her with a stolid air of rather surly surprise.

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When at last she had finished he uttered the following words, which through all the years have remained in my memory,

"Lydy, if you'll stick to *your* business Oi'll stick to moine!"

And with that he marched off and disappeared into the darkness.

"No luck!" said the Princess.

And then we too went on our way.

After the service, which was, it seems to me now, a very happy, popular and warm-hearted affair, calculated to draw men and women together, I drove West to Arlington Street, where I left Lady Zetland. The Princess and her lady-in-waiting remained behind, I forget for what reason, but I think it was because of a request of some kind from Prebendary Carlile.

XVI

Soon after the Armistice celebration we left Falmouth for Broadway. Just before we left, my father, who was now very old and rather feeble in body, though always alert in mind, said to me, "When you are next in London you might look in at my wine-merchants, Justerini and Brooks. I believe they have some champagne there that they are keeping for me, and possibly a few bottles of some other wine, port perhaps."

"Yes," I said. "Do you wish to have it sent here?"

"Oh no! I don't need wine now. You can have whatever there is."

I thanked him and said I would go and find out whether Justerini and Brooks had anything of his, and, if they had, would take possession of it. Subsequently John and I called and found that some dozens of champagne were lying there, a good many bottles of port, and some liqueurs, among them a marvellous liqueur, about a hundred years old, which we eventually named "Angel's Tears." We introduced this to Harry Irving when he was staying with us, and he said it was the most delicious liqueur he had ever tasted. Unfortunately all the champagne had been spoilt by keeping, but the port was excellent.

On the way to Broadway we stayed at Bristol in the College Green Hotel, and on the following day in the late afternoon we arrived at Broadway.

I remember that it was a rather dark and very moist evening as we drove up the long street to the last house but two in the village, the last house of all being Court Farm, where the de Navarros lived, now

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enlarged, as they had incorporated with it the house which had formerly belonged to Maude Valérie White, who had given up living in Broadway but who often came to stay there.

The Knittels were enchanted with Lady Maude Lyon's house and we settled down happily in it for the long months of winter. I introduced them to my friends, the Navarros, by whom they were cordially welcomed and with whom they soon became intimate. Our horses arrived, so we continued our regular riding, going out almost every day. In the mornings, and often after tea in the evenings, John and I got on with our work.

He published his first short story, "Heroes in Ambush," in *Cassell's Magazine*.

Broadway was then one of the most attractive villages in England. It may be still, but I haven't seen it for a good many years, and should not care to go back to it now, for Mary de Navarro and Tony are dead, and they seemed to be the heart and soul of it. Another great friend living there then, May Pemberton, who typed for me many of my books, is also dead. She was a rare being, full of kindness, sincerity and sympathy, and the Knittels became so attached to her that eventually they asked her to be the godmother of their only son, Robert. But during that visit to Broadway Robert had not yet come into being. Nor had Margaret, the Knittels' third child. Doreen still ruled in undisturbed childish majesty in the family life. She was a very sweet child, endowed with a charming nature, which fortunately has never been tarnished by experience of life.

It was at the house of Mrs. Pemberton, May's mother, that I made the acquaintance of two people celebrated all over the United States, who, having retired from their work on the stage, had come to live in England and enjoy the fruits of their labours. These were Mr. and Mrs. Edward Sothern. The latter has always been known to playgoers as Julia Marlowe, the famous Shakespearean actress. While we were in Broadway they rented an attractive house called The Grange at the other end of the long village and we met them continually.

Edward Sothern, now dead, was the most modest and unpretentious star of the stage that I ever encountered, and I have known a great many actors. He never minded telling a story against himself, and he knew a good many. He was a first-rate mimic and his imitations of Sir Henry Irving were especially good. Irving was often sardonic and very abrupt, and he had one decided failing. He scarcely ever expressed admiration of the acting of others. One story Sothern told us was this.

When he was at the height of his success in America, and before he joined forces with Julia Marlowe and starred always in the plays

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of Shakespeare, Irving brought out his London company for a tour all over the States. His second son, Laurence Irving, was in America at the same time, and produced in New York a drama written by himself, an adaptation for the stage of Dostoievsky's great novel, *Crime and Punishment*. In this Sothern played the principal part.

Laurence Irving was extremely anxious to have his father's opinion on his play and on Sothern's performance in it, and he persuaded the management of the theatre where it was being acted to give a matinée of it on a day when Sir Henry was not performing in the afternoon and could come to see it.

He came and sat in a box. Sothern acted, he told us, for "all I was worth."

When the last curtain fell, Laurence Irving hurried to his father's box and said, "What's your opinion, Father? What's your impression?"

"There's something in the play—ha!—something!"

"Yes, isn't there? But what did you think about Ed Sothern's performance? Tell me, what did you think of that?"

Sir Henry preserved an impressive silence for a moment and then jerked out, "Audible! Audible!"

And that was all.

I doubt whether Sir Henry was ever heard to praise another actor. And I never heard him praise an actress. But neither did I ever hear him attack another player's professional reputation. Once, however, it is on record that by implication he suggested that a well-known rival of his was scarcely up to the mark. This rival was Sir Beerbohm Tree.

Tree needed a horse trained for the stage for a Shakespeare play he was acting in, and he borrowed a horse which had appeared in a production of Irving's. This animal he had to mount in a scene. I was told that on the first night when Sir Herbert, who was a good rider by the way, got on its back, the horse did something it should not have done.

When Sir Henry was told of this misfortune afterwards at the Garrick Club he observed, "Ha! That's as much as my horse thinks of Tree's acting in Shakespeare!"

Edward Sothern's father was the Sothern who had such an enormous success in the plays *David Garrick* and *Lord Dundreary*. Before I met the son he had taken American nationality and so had his wife. Both of them were English by birth but had gained their fame in America.

But both still loved England.

While we were living in Broadway I often took country walks with Mrs. Sothern, whose excellent brains and large knowledge of American life made her a very interesting companion. When no walk was in prospect nearly always I rode out with John, and we were often joined by Tony de Navarro, who was glad to have an oppor-

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tunity of riding again. The de Navarros kept no horses, although there was a pack of hounds in the village, and as Tony was by nature a thoroughly sporting man, had been amateur champion of America at rackets and was a good shot, he would have liked to hunt. But Madame de Navarro, who seemed nervous about him, had made him promise years before I knew them that he would never go out hunting.

Even about ordinary riding she seemed anxious, and the first time we all three rode together she came round to the stables to see us mount, and gave Tony several injunctions about not being too reckless. No accident happened, and eventually we had many rides together which Tony greatly enjoyed.

John went out hunting once or twice on the roan, in spite of the roan's small size, and actually took it over stone walls, though, in my opinion, it was not really up to his weight.

This fired my ambition, and one day I joined the hunt on the white horse, which wasn't a hunter and, I imagine, had never been jumped. Although he nearly pulled my arms off, and was inclined to jostle the other horses, John and I managed somehow to keep with the hunt till late in the day, and got home just at dark well satisfied with ourselves. I confessed the next morning that I had been thrown when, attempting to force my horse over a ragged fence near a marshy bit of ground, he had jumped, but had crashed into the middle of it, come down on his knees and flung me out of the saddle, witness my bespattered condition on reaching home. John had not seen this accident. He took my narrative of it with great aplomb, safe in his fixed conviction that I was as tough as an old mule.

In January we bought a lovely little animal at the Cheltenham Army sale, dark brown, beautifully shaped and slightly smaller than the roan. We had him for some time, and more than once I raced him on a long stretch of meadow land against John on the roan. But he had not been properly trained and had tiresome tricks, and eventually we got rid of him.

In Broadway John worked on his first novel, *Aaron West*, and I was working on a novel called *Mrs. Marden*, which greatly offended the devout believers in spiritualism. This was run as a serial before coming out as a book. Early in the year I published a collection of stories called *Snake Bite*. We were also busy on improvements of our play *The Star of Lahore*, and Mrs. de Navarro and I from time to time worked on the play of *The Garden of Allah*, adding touches to improve it for a possible London production.

Earlier than this, with the Knittels, I made an expedition to the Repertory Theatre at Birmingham, intending to meet Harry Irving there and go with him to see John Drinkwater's play on the life and death of Abraham Lincoln. Irving thought of perhaps producing it

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in London. We were to lunch with Irving first, but he didn't turn up and we went to the play without him.

It was done at a matinée, and I'm rather ashamed to acknowledge that neither John nor I thought it would be a success in London. We told Irving so when he came to stay with us at Broadway. He did not produce the play, but when someone else produced it Drinkwater had a great success with it.

Who can foretell what play will succeed and what will fail until it is acted before an audience? I can only remember one play the producer of which told me that he *knew* it must be a success. That was *Bella Donna.* Alexander was positively certain during the rehearsals that it would run for months to crowded audiences, and he didn't hesitate to say so.

He chanced to be right.

I went to Falmouth for Christmas to be with my people, but when I returned on the last day of the year the kind Knittels repeated the Christmas dinner and gave me a plum-pudding flaming gloriously. We spent a merry evening although we were alone, and Frances declares in her diary that I danced the Tarantella. At midnight John went out into the road and cried with all the force of his lungs, "Nineteen hundred and nineteen! God bless the world!" On New Year's Day we went to a dance at the house of some Greek friends, where I indulged in a number of valses.

The winter that year was bitterly cold and we all suffered as none of the houses we knew were properly warmed except one room in one house, The Grange, where the Sotherns lived. Having spent so many years in America, they simply could not exist in a house that was not throughly heated, and whenever we dined with them they had piled up such gigantic fires that the temperature seemed to us like that of a Turkish bath. In fact, one night which we spent with them enjoying delicious fare and excellent conversation Mrs. Knittel fainted on account of the heat. When they and others came to us we could not succeed in getting our house even tolerably warm in the depth of the winter, and several times our guests dined in furs and overcoats. My bedroom in the morning was like an ice-box, and the drawing-room in which I usually worked, except in the afternoon, was chilly. Nevertheless, I don't think any of us suffered from colds.

When the weather got better several friends came to stay with us. Among them was Miss Marion Terry, the sister of Ellen Terry, and a delightful actress, though never quite so famous as Ellen. We all became very fond of her. She trained Isabelle, Frances Knittel's sister, in diction, when Isabelle was studying singing in London before, later, she studied in Rome. She was less striking and impetuous than Ellen Terry, whom she always called "Nell," but she had a great deal of charm and, I thought, had more true delicacy than Ellen, and an

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extraordinary sensitiveness, which was always apparent in her acting. She was as much beloved by the critics as Marie Corelli was detested. I read in the newspapers many accounts of her performances on the stage, and never one which criticized her adversely. The British public adored her, and if, when not acting, she visited a theatre on a first night and was recognized, the audience invariably applauded her as she went to her seat. She was entirely devoid of vanity and self-importance, and her manner had a disarming gentleness. Nearly always she played what are called "sympathetic" parts, but once she was given a part to play which most people considered to be "not in her line" until they saw her in it. This was the difficult rôle of Lady Windermere's mother in Oscar Wilde's first play, *Lady Windermere's Fan*. I saw this on the first night, and Marion Terry scored a complete triumph in it. She told me afterwards that the management had grave doubts about her during the rehearsals, but that she felt certain she could "get away with it." She certainly did. Only once, so far as I remember, was she, perhaps, miscast. This was in Henry Arthur Jones's play, *Michael and His Lost Angel*. In this drama Mrs. Patrick Campbell was given the principal part, which had been specially written for her, but she was impossible at the rehearsals and finally refused to act in it. Marion Terry was engaged to take her place, but the play was not a success and she herself thought the rôle she took did not suit her. In the whole of London it would have been impossible to find two leading actresses more utterly different in temperament from each other than Mrs. Campbell and Marion Terry. In private life everyone liked Marion Terry, and socially she was very popular. She had none of the whims and caprices of the adorable Ellen.

Among others who stayed with us in Broadway were Frances Knittel's sister, Isabelle White, who one afternoon sang quite brilliantly to a number of people in the de Navarros' drawing-room, accompanied by her then teacher, Maude Valérie White. The Navarros and a few others were in the audience. Harry Irving, Maude White and two or three others visited us, but often we were alone. Isabelle, after studying hard for the operatic stage for several years, in London and Rome, finally married a soldier, and gave up the idea of having a public career. She appeared once only in opera with the Carl Rosa Opera Company, taking the part of Michaela in *Carmen* with success. Her husband is Brigadier-General Brownjohn, O.B.E., M.C., and she has one son, now in a public school. She has a really beautiful soprano voice but seems now to have entirely given up using it. I regret this.

Living in Broadway we were within riding distance of Stratford-on-Avon, where Miss Marie Corelli was still living, although she had changed her house and now occupied a larger house at the other end

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of the world-famed village. John had never met her, and one day I suggested that we should ride over and pay a call on her. He agreed, and on the first fine day we set out.

We went first to a hotel and stabled the horses. Then I called at Miss Corelli's house, and sent in a note to tell her we were lunching in Stratford and would like to visit her during the afternoon if it would not be inconvenient to her. She returned an answer inviting us both to tea, and at four o'clock we went to her house.

We found her and Miss Vyver established in an elaborately furnished mansion, whose drawing-room windows looked out upon a garden which, though I only saw it dimly on account of the misty weather, seemed to me very large and important. Miss Corelli, too, was important though very cordial. Her years of enormous success had naturally enough given her a good conceit of herself, in spite of the attacks of the critics.

"They're all bitterly envious of me," she observed. "There's one thing they can't forgive me."

I inquired what it was.

"The fact that I make so much money," she said. "And that they don't, and can't! Poor chaps! I forgive them!"

She showed me a part of the house on the ground floor, and said, "Everything you see here has been paid for by my pen."

I congratulated her on her success.

The Sorrows of Satan had caused great rejoicing in Stratford-on-Avon. Her description of them had gone all over the world.

We then had a sumptuous tea ministered to by dear, kind Miss Vyver, while our lively hostess kept up a sharp-witted conversation, salted with many acidulated comments on those she disliked. She had a curious contempt, I noticed, for most of the people connected with the theatre, and made one remark that rather shocked me.

A very popular actor, William Terriss, the darling of Adelphi audiences, had been murdered one night as he was entering the stage door of the theatre for the evening performance. His dead body was carried into the theatre behind the scenes, and Miss Milward, the leading lady, with whom he had been closely associated, stricken with horror at the sight, exclaimed, "Oh, my God! Poor Bill! Poor Bill!"

Miss Corelli quoted this to me and I shall never forget the sneering sound of her voice as she caricatured the actress's cry of "Poor Bill!"

Towards the end of tea Miss Vyver suddenly sprang up and hastened away into the depths of the drawing-room. I wondered why until she returned, carrying a pot of gold-coloured jam in one hand and a pot of rose-red jam in the other.

"These," she said, "I keep for my favourrrites!" (With a hospitable roll of her *rs*.)

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And she bestowed one pot on me and the other on John.

When we left to ride home I said to John, "Now you have the right to be satisfied with life. You are one of Miss Vyver's 'favourrrites'!"

At tea Miss Corelli told me something which had evidently amused her and which amused me. It was about Horatio Bottomley, who at that time edited *John Bull*. No doubt he was extremely clever. But unfortunately his chief interest in life seemed to be swindling the public, and indeed trying to swindle almost everyone he came into contact with. Eventually he was convicted and sent to prison. Fat and roguish, he drank a bottle of champagne every day about one o'clock.

Miss Corelli knew this gentleman and informed me that one day he turned up unexpectedly in Stratford-on-Avon in a motor-car, saying he was on his way through to London, and suggested that he could lunch with her.

She complied and he lunched in her luxurious dining-room.

When he was leaving he said, "Now I must go to the hotel and pick up my friend."

"I didn't know you were with anyone. Why didn't you bring him here?"

Bottomley smiled, winked genially and replied, "I thought the two of us might be a bit too much for you."

"But why? Who is he?"

"Well—it's Hooley!" (Terah Hooley was another notorious shark, and also suffered a term of imprisonment.)

Miss Corelli was considered in Stratford-on-Avon to be a decidedly "difficult" little lady, in spite of her protection of the reputation of Shakespeare, which was unceasing. That she could be so I eventually discovered.

Mr. and Mrs. Sothern, though they had retired from public performances, were always ready to help any good cause with their talents. When we were in Broadway, though the war was over, there were many soldiers in, and near, Stratford-on-Avon, and a sort of club existed there for their benefit, at which from time to time entertainments were given.

The secretary of this club wrote to Mr. Sothern asking whether his wife and he would go there one evening to dine and afterwards give a performance for the soldiers and some of their friends. If so, he would send them a few tickets to give away if they wished to bring any friends with them.

They assented with pleasure and, as I had never heard them in their art, asked me whether I should like to go with Frances Knittel and John. Of course I was delighted at the prospect, and they asked for three tickets for us.

These tickets never came, but a letter from Miss Corelli to me did come.

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It informed me that I was evidently labouring under a misapprehension. The secretary had no right to do what he had done. Miss Corelli was the president of the Soldiers' Club and nothing could be done in connection with it unless her approval had previously been obtained. The secretary had not applied to her for this. However, she was willing that we should come with Mr. and Mrs. Sothern, as quite evidently I had, when I accepted, not been aware that the secretary had exceeded his prerogatives in promising to send me the tickets.

Of course, after this the Knittels and I felt that we could not possibly go, and I wrote to Miss Corelli very politely, expressing my regret at the misunderstanding and saying that we should not be able to be present.

Unfortunately at the end of my note I added a few words about the food difficulty caused by the rationing of food which was still in force, explaining that we felt we could not add three people to the guests who were to be entertained at the dinner, or supper, which was to precede the performance.

I did this quite innocently. At the moment of writing I had entirely forgotten that some time before this Miss Corelli had been summoned before the magistrates of Stratford-on-Avon for "food hoarding."

This unintended shaft, however, probably went home. Anyhow, Miss Corelli returned no answer to my missive, and I don't think I ever met her again. She never entered Lady Maude's house during my tenancy of it.

Often in the evenings after dinner we went to Court Farm to spend pleasant—and sometimes lively—evenings with the de Navarros, who sometimes sang to us. Maude White was occasionally there and played brilliantly. One night she played the Italian Tarantella which she and I had so often heard in Sicily, and the de Navarros and I, and a fourth guest—who it was I forget now—danced it wildly. Towards the end of our performance Madame de Navarro suddenly exclaimed, "I'm a buck nigger!" And, though it seemed impossible, she contorted her beautiful face until it actually looked negroid, and a sullen negress, with half-shut eyes and a body that had abruptly slumped and lost all its grace—the grace that had reminded me of her Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*—was heavily prancing among us.

When that Tarantella was over we all played "musical chairs," with Maude White still at the piano.

We had many happy days and happy evenings in Broadway and were in no hurry to leave it, but I had only leased Lady Maude's house for a limited number of months and the time too soon came when John and I realized that we must bestir ourselves and seek for another temporary home.

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After a rather prolonged search by motor we at last found a house which we both liked. It was in Surrey and had the curious name of Vann. It was buried in the country near a village called Hambledon, and belonged to a celebrated architect who happened just then to wish to let it, though it was the country home of him and his family. It had stables, a charming garden with a lawn-tennis court, was interestingly furnished, contained a specially beautiful dining-room, a billiard-room with a sort of large interior balcony in which stood a grand piano, and was big enough for us and some guests if we cared to have them, as well as for our servants. Moreover, it stood in really delicious country.

We decided to take it, and were sure Frances Knittel would like it. She did, and we all moved into it and settled down for the summer.

In this house the Knittels' son, Robert, was born. While we lived there Tony de Navarro spent several weeks with us, rode with us, played lawn-tennis and billiards, wrote, as John and I did, and made music. Maude Valérie White came and a few others, and Madame de Navarro paid us a fleeting visit. Toty de Navarro, then a boy, also visited us. We were all very fond of him. He now owns Court Farm and is married. He was the devoted son of his beautiful mother and is as musical as his father used to be.

One evening in Vann an entirely unexpected musical performance was given in the balcony to an entranced and astonished audience.

John and I paid a visit to Bath and saw by chance in a music-shop window a finely coloured violoncello.

John stopped and said, "I should like to buy that instrument."

"Why?" I said. "There's no one in the house who can play it."

"I want to play it."

"Have you ever learnt to?"

"No. But I think I'll buy it."

He went into the shop, bought the 'cello and had it forwarded to Surrey.

On the evening of the day it arrived there, after dinner he said to me, "Now I'm going to play the Austrian Hymn on that 'cello and you can accompany me on the piano."

We mounted into the balcony, I sat down at the piano, John took the bow and placed the 'cello between his knees, I struck a chord, and he began.

I can't say that he was a successful rival of Casals, but he actually succeeded in giving a rendering of the Austrian Hymn that was recognizable. How he managed it I never understood. Some instinct apparently guided him, for he had never played a stringed instrument before.

Although he had never learnt to play the piano, and could not read music, he often improvised on the piano for hours, and to me his

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improvisations sounded like early—very early—Beethoven. He also painted now and then, and drew admirable caricatures of people he knew and popular types.

We had few neighbours while we were at Vann, but I made friends with the Alfred Sutros, who had a pretty house not far from us, and with Graham Robertson, who also lived within reach.

Alfred Sutro was a successful writer of plays, and became well known when his drama, *The Walls of Jericho*, was produced in London. His wife was a sister of Lord Reading, who became Viceroy of India, and whom I met a few times. The Somerset Maughams came to stay with them while we were at Vann and I saw them once more. Maugham looked stronger than when we had ridden together, and seemed to have recovered his health. He was hard at work again, continuing his brilliant career, which led him eventually to the beautiful white villa on Cap Ferrat from which he has been driven by the World War.

Graham Robertson was unlike anyone else whom I have met. A great friend of Ellen Terry, he dwelt alone in a country house surrounded by a collection of pictures by Blake. He was decidedly eccentric but exceedingly kind and gentle, the sort of man one instinctively feels inclined to call "Uncle" even though he is no relation. I should think that he lived a secluded life, but he welcomed us to his house and came to see us in ours. He was decidedly what Norman Forbes used to call "a dear." And I should have liked to have him for a permanent neighbour. But we only had Vann for a few months, and then moved out of his reach and I have never seen him again. But I remember him with singular clearness, wearing one of his very large, even voluminous hats, full of kindness, goodwill, simplicity—and subtlety. Many people, I am sure, must have loved him.

XVII

In the following October we gave up our tenancy of Vann, sold our horses and carriage, dismissed all the servants except two, and went for a month to Switzerland, where we stayed in a hotel.

The Knittel family had now been increased by the birth of the son, who was named Robert after me. Doreen no longer had it all her own way with me, but she took the great change in her situation with creditable resolution, and was interested in the baby brother.

In November, suddenly seized with the spirit of adventure, which

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John, by the way, has never lost, we left Europe and set sail for Algiers. This was really owing to my glowing accounts of the glory and romance of North Africa. The weather in Switzerland had been exceedingly bad. I sang the praises of the African sun. Mrs. Knittel and the nurse who came with us were rather anxious about the baby Robert, who was perhaps hardly ripe yet for adventures in Africa, but they gave in to persuasion and we took ship from Marseilles, and after a tolerable voyage arrived in the Algerian harbour on the afternoon of November the 12th.

The weather when we disembarked was perfect, and we were greeted on the quay by a porter from the Hôtel St. George on the height of Mustapha Supérieur, who informed us that not one drop of rain had fallen during the last seven months.

"There!" I exclaimed triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you?"

And in the highest spirits we entered the bus which was to convey us to the delightful hotel in which I had already engaged rooms.

My short-lived travel-pride was soon to have a fall that I have never forgotten.

We reached the hotel. The Knittels were delighted with it and our rooms. A repast was ordered to be served in an hour and a half in our sitting-room, and "for once," I said recklessly, "we must have some champagne." Meanwhile, being English, I descended to the Oriental hall to have a cup of tea, leaving the Knittels to unpack and settle in.

I happened to be alone in the hall, and I was just beginning to sip my tea when I heard, apparently underneath the hotel, a loud roaring sound, almost exactly like the noise one hears in a train when passing through a tunnel. For an instant the absurd thought came into my mind that actually a tunnel must have been constructed under the land on which the hotel stood, in the hill of Mustapha Supérieur, and that an express train was roaring through it. Then the sound abruptly ceased. I got up and hurried out of the hall.

"What's happened?" I asked the hall porter, who was talking loudly to some people in the bureau.

It was an earthquake. Yet I had not noticed any trembling of the hotel, I had only heard the roaring noise.

I ran upstairs to the Knittels. Nobody seemed frightened. Nothing more occurred to frighten us. At the appointed time our dinner—or supper—was brought to us, and the champagne I had ordered. But while we were eating, and discussing what had happened, and when a waiter was just opening the champagne, all the electric lights in the hotel went out, and we heard the pop of the cork leaving the bottle in pitch darkness. A good deal of the champagne mingled with our food in the blackness, and we had to finish our meal by dim candlelight.

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The earthquake did a good deal of damage in the neighbourhood of Algiers, but not in Mustapha Supérieur.

Unfortunately it upset the weather, which became variable, but we had such charming rooms, and John and I so much work to do, and Mrs. Knittel so much to occupy her time with the baby—especially as Nurse Smith fell ill and was obliged to undergo an operation—that we made ourselves quite happy.

Soon after our arrival the hotel began to fill up. Lord and Lady March and their family made a long stay. The friends with whom I had made a dash to Biskra during the war, Mrs. Barclay and her son Sandy, arrived. Others whom we knew were Mrs. and Miss Dawson-Damer; Lady Kintore; Lady d'Arcy Osborne; Mr. Longfellow, the son of the poet, with his wife; a very interesting Major Black, who was familiar with the wilds of Africa, and who was presently joined by his wife, Lady Marcia; General Sir Aylmer and Lady Hunter-Weston; Madame Fleury Hérard, an attractive Frenchwoman; Admiral and Mrs. Clarke, and a good many others, including Mr. Michael Arlen, who introduced himself to me with the words, "I'm an Armenian."

I already knew some members of the English colony who came to Algiers every winter to open their villas. Among them was Mrs. Arthur, who had a lovely old Arab house with a glorious garden not far from, but slightly below, the hotel. She was socially the leader of the English colony, and in the past had often entertained me, and had kindly allowed me to visit her garden whenever I liked, and to wander all over it. She kept some fifteen gardeners in this paradise making it beautiful. I knew her well and had had many conversations alone with her upon various subjects. Yet during this visit she succeeded in giving me a surprise.

The surprise was this.

One morning I received an invitation from her. It was an invitation to a luncheon more than usually important. In it she wrote, I remember, that I knew of her very great love for music.

(On searching my memory I could not remember that she had ever mentioned music to me.)

She went on to tell me that the famous French pianist and composer, Monsieur Camille Saint-Saëns, had just arrived in Algiers, and had signified his inclination to lunch with her on a date which she gave. This was a great honour and she was asking a large number of ardent music-lovers like herself to meet him. Would I come? She was inviting also Lady d'Arcy Osborne and Lady Kintore, who both *adored* music, and perhaps I would escort them down the hill to her house on the day of the lunch.

I had never met Monsieur Saint-Saëns, but of course I knew all about him, and had heard a great deal of his music. He was now an old man and for years had been world-famous. Pleased at the prospect of know-

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ing him, of course I accepted, and told Lady d'Arcy and Lady Kintore that I would gladly escort them to the villa to meet the *cher maître*.

I then learned from them, what I had not known or suspected before, that they were both passionately fond of music. This fact hitherto had been kept hidden from me.

The great day arrived and we three set forth on foot in good time, as Mrs. Arthur had asked us to be punctual so that all might be assembled when Monsieur Saint-Saëns arrived. On the way down we naturally talked of nothing but music, and I told the two ladies a good deal about Monsieur Saint-Saëns which they hadn't known. I told them of his winters passed in Cairo as the guest of Prince Mohamed Aly in the palace on Rhoda Island in the Nile, and of his intimacy as a quite young man with Richard Wagner in Paris, where he played his marvellous versions for the piano of the Wagner scores for opera to the delight of the composer.

"Perhaps you have read about all that in Wagner's *Mein Leben?*" I hazarded.

But no: they had not.

I also reminded them that Saint-Saëns, as well as a great pianist, was an accomplished organist, and had been for a time the organist of the Madeleine in Paris.

This seemed to astonish them.

"In every way he is an astoundingly accomplished man," I said. "He is not only a musician, he is a *savant* as well."

They were both by this time more than ever on the *qui vive* to meet him. They wondered if there were any chance of his playing to us after luncheon.

"Let's hope so!"

And as we turned into the garden we were all hoping.

When we arrived at the house we found an imposing assemblage gathered together. The Admiral of the Port was there in uniform; General Nivelle, commanding the troops in North Africa after his misfortunes in France during the war; other French officers and important officials; some French ladies and members of the English colony, including the English Consul, also the Prince and Princess of Annam; and for a few minutes we all stood around and talked about music. I was pleased and somewhat surprised to find so many genuine lovers of music in Algiers. Monsieur Saint-Saëns would surely be pleased and satisfied when he arrived.

At last Mrs. Arthur's English butler hurried in to say that He was here, and she went to the door of the room downstairs in which we were standing to receive Him.

He came in with the Mayor of Algiers, who was a very tall and very erudite French professor.

The great master was short, or seemed so beside the towering mayor.

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He wore a small well-trimmed beard, a tightly buttoned frock-coat, a handsome cravat. He looked to me exactly like an old Royalty, and I could imagine him bowing solemnly from a State open carriage to an applauding crowd as, escorted by cavalry, he passed down the Champs Elysées. He stood erect beside Mrs. Arthur, who presented each of us to him in turn. When my turn came he clasped my hand and bowed slightly, and I bowed more deeply in reply. I did not hear him utter a word.

Luncheon was announced and we filed in—Mrs. Arthur going first, escorting the master.

At the luncheon-table Monsieur Saint-Saëns was on Mrs. Arthur's right. Lady Kintore sat next to him on his right hand, and I was placed next to her.

The wonderful and copious luncheon began.

Lady Kintore was a very cordial, lively and talkative lady, who loved conversation. I saw her look eagerly several times at the master who in silence was, with the most careful discrimination, dealing with the food on his plate. He arranged each morsel like an artist before conveying it to his mouth: a lozenge of meat, just the right size, a small cap of potato to crown it, a splash of rich gravy to soften it, three or four peas, just a soupçon of fat—and then in with it! And so forth and so on. But—no conversation!

He then drank a sip of white wine—and back to his food.

Lady Kintore, with evident difficulty restraining the mounting flood of conversation imprisoned within her, turned to me and half whispered, "Shall I speak to him, do you think?"

"Yes," I murmured back, "say something!"

She turned around to the master, who with his fork was chasing an errant pea that apparently did not wish to be eaten, and said in French, "At what age, dear Master, did you realize that God had given you your genius for music?"

Monsieur Saint-Saëns regarded her gravely and after a brief pause replied, "Madame, à l'âge de deux ans!"

This reply seemed to lay her out, for she did not venture on another remark, and during the rest of the lunch subsided on me.

Luncheon at last over, we all repaired to the beautiful Arab drawing-room upstairs, and formed a sort of large circle with the *cher maître* set in the midst, still next to Lady Kintore and flanked on the left by his hostess. Coffee and liqueurs were brought. Monsieur Saint-Saëns had a tiny stool by his chair inlaid with mother-of-pearl. On this were his coffee and a glass of priceless old brandy.

With an air of great contentment he partook of both, and a sort of dawning vitality seemed to inform his whole person.

Lady Kintore murmured to me, "I believe he's going to say something!"

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I nodded assent. And then the master's voice became audible and he said to Mrs. Arthur, always in French, "You are fond of music?"

She burst eagerly into assurances. Music, she told him, had been the greatest joy, the greatest consolation, of her life. It had helped her through sorrows and enabled her to bear with patience many misfortunes. A murmur of assent from the assembled music-lovers seemed to give point to her words.

The master glanced round with apparent approval, and then said, "As you are all such lovers of music, if you, Madame, will take me to the music-room, I will play you my piano transcription of the chief scenes of my opera, *Samson et Dalila*."

Lady Kintore gave me a glance of triumph, and we all looked delighted—except Mrs. Arthur.

To my great surprise she seemed embarrassed. She even flushed slightly and then said, "*Cher Maître*, this is an old *Arab* house."

"Mais oui, mais oui!"

"And the old Arabs—that is, the Arabs did not care for music as *we* do."

"Ah!"

"And so—and so in their houses they made no special provision for *music*."

"Et alors, Madame?"

"And so—the fact is there is no music-room in my house."

There was a slight, but potent, pause. Then the master said, "Never mind, then. Show me where your piano is and I will play my transcription."

Mrs. Arthur's face turned almost scarlet, and finally she stammered out the truth. Although she had fifteen gardeners to look after her domain, and a beautifully furnished house, although, too, she was a devotee of music—she had no piano.

After this rather unfortunate episode the festivity almost collapsed. Monsieur Saint-Saëns very soon took his leave. Before going, however, I had a short conversation with him as he strolled round the drawing-room glancing at the various *bibelots* it contained with the eyes of a connoisseur. During this, in speaking of the music of Wagner, whom he had known so intimately in his youth, and whose scores he had studied minutely, he said, "Yes, he was very wonderful, very great, but what *longueurs* in his operas! When you know his music you realize something of the meaning of eternity. That which lasts for ever, which never ends, which *cannot* end."

Soon after Mrs. Arthur's lunch Monsieur Saint-Saëns gave in a large public concert-room a *discours* on music, followed by a concert in which he played solos, and also, with a French colleague, a big duet for two pianos by Schumann. The room was crammed, even the platform being covered with seats. General Nivelle and many officers

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were there in uniform, and all those who "counted" for anything in Algiers. Needless to say that Lady Kintore and Mrs. Arthur were in the forefront. Monsieur Saint-Saëns not only played brilliantly, he also spoke brilliantly. On the following day he left Algiers for the baths of Hammam R'hira. I never met him again.

Some years afterwards, when I was living in Egypt, Prince Mohamed Aly, with whom Monsieur Saint-Saëns spent several winters as an honoured guest, told me that his knowledge was astonishing. It even extended into the domain of botany. The Prince has a wonderful garden, part of which is given up to a great collection of rock plants. And Monsieur Saint-Saëns, he said, knew quite as much about rock plants as the expert gardener who had helped him (the Prince) to gather them together.

A wonderful man—apart from his special, innate gifts as a musician!

Ever so many years afterwards, when travelling by car through Normandy to visit an unfortunate friend confined during the war in a concentration camp, I motored through a village called "Saint-Saëns," and thought of Mrs. Arthur's lunch in Algiers.

On my first visit to Algeria with the Knittels, but not my last, we stayed at the St. George from November the 12th till the end of January, and got through a good deal of work besides meeting many pleasant people. Lord Leigh arrived after Christmas, friends of ours from England called Mr. and Mrs. Burt, Lord and Lady Fortescue and many others. Those were the days when Algiers drew to Mustapha Supérieur great numbers of English people in the winter and spring, and a good many English had white villas on the heights above the city.

At that time every week I had a starvation day, during which, though I drank tea, I ate nothing. On those days usually I felt in specially good spirits, specially light and lively, and, when it was fine, played lawn-tennis during the afternoon. John, who later on was three times Swiss champion at golf, did not care very much for tennis, but I could always get three people from the hotel to join me in a doubles. In the evening I sometimes went to see a French comedy at the theatre, or to the opera, where Mrs. Arthur had a box to which she often invited me—as a lover of music!

When Mr. and Mrs. Burt arrived we were induced by them, or persuaded them—I forget now which—to carry out a rather risky project. We bought between us a very powerful open Napier motor-car, which looked as if it had belonged to a war profiteer. The Burts put up half the money for it and we contributed the other half. I forget what exactly the sharing terms for the use of it were, but I know that we never quarrelled over it, that we were several times in it together, and that eventually they turned it over entirely to us. Our

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début with this car was, however, unfortunate and gave scoffers in the hotel a good opportunity for laughing at us.

With the assent of the Burts, John and I decided to motor as far as Bou Saada at the edge of the desert to see how the car would behave, and on January the 20th, in the early morning, after an affectionate farewell to Mrs. Knittel and the children, we set off full of pleasant anticipation.

We didn't even get out of the garden. Something went wrong with the car, and when at lunch we were forced to show ourselves in the dining-room we were the joke of the whole hotel.

On the following day, however, we really did get off at six o'clock in the morning and had a successful trip.

When the time came for us to move south to Biskra, which I wished to show to the Knittels, and which I was obliged to visit for a reason connected with *The Garden of Allah*, the Knittels decided to travel in the Napier while I travelled by train to El Kantara, where I wanted to stay for a night at the Hôtel Bertrand, and where in the past I had spent many happy days. The Burts would come on to Biskra by train, and we would all use the car together in Biskra.

On January the 30th I took the night train and the Knittels gave a farewell dinner to Mr. Thurston, the British Consul-General, and some other friends. They were to start in the Napier in good time the next morning. The morning came, but no car. The beastly thing had gone wrong again and the Algiers mechanics couldn't find out what was the matter.

On the previous evening the Knittels had said goodbye to everybody, including the Burts, Lord and Lady March, Major Black, the Hunter-Westons, the Dawson-Damers and others, and now, like John and myself on a previous occasion, they were forced to face the music in the big dining-room at lunch. They told me afterwards that when they came in and went to their table, upon every face there appeared a smile of satirical amusement. They had to leave for Biskra by train ignominiously in the evening, and picked me up the next day at El Kantara.

At Biskra we settled down in the big Royal Hotel facing the oasis and the desert, in which I had stayed long ago when Monsieur André Gide, with his wife and his cousin, were staying there too.

Biskra then had been a deliciously quiet place, unknown to most people, and not much frequented by travellers. Now it was emphatically on the map, and in the season was thronged with Americans. That was partly my fault and I knew it. Nevertheless I had now come to Biskra for a reason that was likely to increase its notoriety.

At last *The Garden of Allah* play had been accepted for production in London at the Drury Lane Theatre. Mr. Arthur Collins's rooted objection to it had been forcibly overcome, and he was journeying

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out with his American wife to meet me in Biskra and to prepare for a big production of a play he had no belief in. Poor man! I rather dreaded his arrival, which was imminent. But I was very glad that my ambition to have the work done, if done at all in London, at Drury Lane was at last to be achieved.

Matheson Lang had asked me to let him have the play, and Beerbohm Tree on several occasions had hinted to me that it might do well at His Majesty's Theatre, but I had preferred to wait. I guessed that Beerbohm Tree would like to play the Monk, and somebody told me he thought his clever daughter, Viola, was just the girl to create Domini. But he never definitely asked me for the play, and I was glad of that, as I didn't think him suitable for the rôle of the Monk, though he was, of course, in parts that suited him, a brilliant actor.

Mr. Golding Bright, who was our theatrical agent in London, and who was supposed to be the best judge of a play's possibilities existing, had always believed firmly in *The Garden of Allah*. He had told me many times that it *couldn't* fail.

But Arthur Collins, the director and producer at Drury Lane, was confident that it couldn't succeed in England and had told me so frankly.

His opposition had now been overcome in this way.

A very rich man, who believed in our play, had acquired such a large number of shares in the company which ran Drury Lane Theatre that he had obtained the power to overrule the opposition of Arthur Collins, and was able at last to insist on the play's production.

And now Mr. Collins was coming to Biskra!

He arrived with his good-looking American wife and I met them at the station.

"Well," he said, as he greeted me, "here I am, ready to do my best for you!"

Obliged to give in, he had chivalrously resolved to think only of the good of the play. He disliked it, he didn't believe in it, but he would work for its success nevertheless.

I introduced his wife and him to the Knittels, and we immediately set to work.

Arthur Collins was an extremely shrewd man and had had a vast experience as a producer of big spectacular dramas. His aim was always to attract the crowd. For Drury Lane was a very large theatre and very expensive to run, like the New Century Theatre in New York, and unless great numbers of people could be lured to it at every performance and play produced, there must be a failure.

He impressed this fact upon me in Biskra. I said that in America our play had crammed all the biggest theatres. In not a single city had it failed to be a success.

"American taste is quite different from English taste," he replied.

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"If it's to draw crowds in London we've got to be damned clever with the production."

"Well then," I said, "let's be damned clever."

"Show me the famous garden here!" he said.

And I took him to Count Landon's wonderful garden at the edge of the desert.

This, I was glad to note, greatly impressed him.

"I can do something with this," he said. "I shall make sketches here."

"Do you paint, then?" I said.

"Of course," he replied.

And he began to make sketches for scenery.

We then set to work to buy quantities of costumes. We went to see the Ouled Naïl girls dance, and he arranged about some dancers for London. A handsome young Arab called Tayeb helped him to engage the right people who would be willing to appear for a season there; dancers, musicians, camel-men, etc.

He began to be really interested, but he still doubted the value of the play.

One morning he said to me, "I know my London."

"I believe you," I said, for he was a Cockney.

"About these camels we've got to bring over," he said.

"Yes—what about them?" I asked.

He half shut his eyes, looked at me and said, "There's got to be a baby among them."

"A baby!" I said. "Why? We surely can't take an Arab baby to London. Besides, a baby would be utterly lost on the huge stage of Drury Lane."

"A baby camel, my boy!" was his reply.

"Ah!" I said. "I understand."

"A baby camel, believe me, could do a lot for your play," he rejoined.

It wasn't very flattering to my pride as a playwright, but I saw his point, and exclaimed, "Let's go out and find a baby camel that will appeal to the London public!"

"Fetch Tayeb!" he said. "He's up to everything here."

Tayeb was summoned, and the search for a really attractive baby camel was begun. It lasted for several days, but at length one was found that Arthur Collins asserted "would appeal to every true mother in London."

It did, and even brought us an unexpected advertisement, for one of those ardent middle-aged spinsters who are always on the look-out for cruelty to animals accused us of starving our baby camel, and a case about it got into the papers and fastened attention on us and our play. I need hardly say that we had no intention of destroying by starvation the animal Arthur Collins often subsequently declared had done more for our play than "anyone else." The reason which roused

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her ire was the sudden thinness of the baby, who got a touch of mange and in consequence had to be shaved.

Arthur Collins was indefatigable in seeing everything native in Biskra. He carefully studied the proceedings of the sand-diviner who haunted Count Landon's garden, but he decided not to bring the rather old gentleman to London, and said he would train a London actor to play the part. It was eventually played with success by Mr. Caleb Porter. We talked over the cast while we were in Biskra. Eventually Domini was played by Miss Madge Titheridge, who was very popular with the London public, and Mr. Godfrey Tearle played the Monk.

Every day almost we were immersed in preparations for the production. Meanwhile the Knittels, who had engaged an old acquaintance of mine called Jusef as their permanent guide, went to see all the "sights" and made short excursions into the desert. Jusef was famous in Biskra as the man who had conducted an expedition from Biskra to Timbuctoo. I trusted him thoroughly, but he let me down later, as I will relate. He was absolutely honest, and it was partly my fault that he let me down.

While Arthur Collins and I were working, travellers flowed into Biskra. Among them came Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston and his wife, whom we had known at Algiers.

My acquaintance with the well-known General, who had commanded an army in France during the recent war, had come about without an introduction. One afternoon, after the Hunter-Westons' arrival at the St. George, when I was standing with friends in the garden close to the entrance where a big motor-car was drawn up, an important and lively looking man unknown to me came out accompanied by a friend, and on seeing me bestowed on me a genial smile, and followed it up by grasping my hand.

"Glad to see you! Fine weather!" he ejaculated, and he sprang into the car and drove off looking very pleased with himself.

"Who on earth is that?" I inquired.

"What? You don't know him? That's Hunter Bunter!" was the answer.

For some unknown reason the British army in France had given the General this name, and—I scarcely know why—I felt that it suited him entirely.

The General was in command of the 8th Corps in France, and was in the attack on the Somme which proved so tragic. He served through the war to the end, and was now having a good time in Algeria as a prominent victorious General. Wherever he went he seemed to be fêted, and it was obvious that he thoroughly enjoyed all the attention he received. Why he singled me out in the garden of the St. George I shall never know. Perhaps he mistook me for

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someone else. But when I encountered him and his wife later on in the hotel he was exuberantly cordial, and they both made friends with the Knittels and me, and we saw a good deal of them. And now here they were in Biskra and still being fêted by the French and the Arabs.

They stayed, of course, at the Royal Hotel and were received by Biskra almost as if they were Royalties. The Arabs regarded them with reverence, and the officers of the French garrison made much of them. Bou Aziz ben Gana, the great desert chieftain, whom I had known for years, invited them to a banquet, and the General and his lady found Biskra delightful.

They knew what I was doing there, and seemed interested in it as a side-line, and one day Sir Aylmer said to me, "Could the baby camel spare you for a few hours tomorrow about noon?"

"I dare say he might," I replied. "I could ask him. But why?"

"The Arabs of Sidi Okbar are giving a fête in my honour tomorrow about lunch-time, and my wife and I thought you might like to accompany us to it. You might get some ideas, perhaps, for a scene in another *Garden of Allah*."

I thanked him for asking me and said I would speak to Arthur Collins about it.

He told me, of course, I could go. He seemed much amused at the General's "African Progress," as he called it, and said he thought I ought to receive a Sahara decoration for putting Biskra on the map.

"I never so much as heard of it," he said, "till you wrote your novel. Perhaps after all we can do something with it in London."

I told the General I should be able to go.

On the following morning, in a blaze of sunshine, he, his wife and I mounted into a sort of wagonette with a pair of horses, and escorted by a running white dromedary, set off on the desert drive to the oasis of Sidi Okbar, the General in uniform and wearing his many well-earned decorations. He looked simply radiant and said,

"This is a fine experience. The French have treated us splendidly, and now it's the turn of the Arabs."

I preened myself and felt for the first time almost military-minded. After all, I had served in the Special Constables and been on guard before the American Embassy in London!

The white dromedary rushed before us over the stony track of the desert, heralding our approach to the oasis which rose out of the desert far off almost like an isle rising out of the ocean.

As we drew near we saw a crowd of Arabs at the entrance to the road which wound into the palm grove. They were formed up in two lines. We passed between them, and as we did so, on either side of us bang, bang, went their matchlocks, or whatever the guns of the natives are called. I'm rather afraid that I ducked at this unexpected and very noisy salute, but I quickly recovered myself as I saw the

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General standing up in the wagonette and saluting. *Noblesse oblige!* Perhaps never again should I be escorted by a white dromedary and received with salvoes that suggested a gunpowder plot.

We penetrated into the core of the oasis and entered the crowded market-place, from around which, with the uproar of musketry, mingled the shrill twittering of the veiled Arab women. Finally we drew up before a very large tent, where we were solemnly received by the notables, and partook of a sort of banquet which lasted a good while and was conducted with great impressiveness.

At the end of this a speech was made by the headman of Sidi Okbar, a Caid, which I was unable to understand. Sir Aylmer replied in fluent French, delivered in a powerful voice and with great emphasis. He said that he was delighted with his reception in Northern Africa, which had more than repaid him for all the hardships and efforts of the great war in France.

"Everything," he said, "has been as it should be. What has happened today is most suitable. We couldn't have wished for anything better."

And he finished by a glowing tribute to France and the best of good wishes to the Protectorate.

Some more guns were then fired. We repaired to an open space where there was a short fantasia; the mounted Arabs galloping at full speed on their fiery horses, bending over the richly decorated saddles and firing right and left at invisible enemies as they went. And finally, after an elaborate adieu to the head of the village, we took our departure, and returned through the desert to Biskra, always preceded by the running white dromedary that served as our escort.

Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston had enjoyed it immensely. Lady Hunter-Weston, who shared in all his glories, and was evidently his devoted companion and comrade, seemed perfectly satisfied too. And as for me, for once in my life I felt almost important. This was a new and not disagreeable sensation. But it soon died out in the light of common day, for the Hunter-Westons departed to be fêted in other parts of the Protectorate and I returned to my preparations for the London production of *The Garden of Allah* in the society of Arthur Collins.

Always with the assistance of the good-looking Tayeb we bought in the market-place, and such bazaars as there were, masses of costumes, weapons, musical instruments, slippers, fly-whisks, turbans and tarbooshes, and we interviewed various people who might be of use to us. All Biskra knew what we were doing. Tayeb took care of that. All Biskra knew he was shortly going to London, where a great representation of Biskra and Biskra life was to be given in a huge building for the edification of the Roumis who had actually, poor Christian dogs, never seen the street of the Ouled Naïls and the golden sands of the Sahara. Nor the dried and cracked earth strewn with

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pebbles, nor the scorpions, the horned vipers, the locusts and the sandstorms of that mighty and, to Biskra, familiar phenomenon.

Meanwhile baby Robert's nurse, Miss Smith, became more and more dissatisfied with life in Biskra. She had recovered from her expensive operation in Algiers but found the Sahara not at all to her liking, and was always complaining. The weather had become glorious, but she found it too hot, and she declared that the food provided in the hotel did not suit what she described on several occasions as "the Smith Stomach." I told her we had specially arranged for her to have the same food as we had. To this she retorted that the "Smith Stomach" was peculiarly sensitive and that it could not "do" with "African food." She added that in her opinion it was crazy to bring a new-born baby from England to such an "outlandish place."

Crazy or not, Robert survived it and is now a fine healthy young man enjoying a successful career in America.

At last Arthur Collins had finished his sketches for scenery and our preparations were completed. Baron Cederström, who had turned up in Biskra, departed. Lady Dorothy Mills, who had also arrived, left on an adventurous journey through the desert to the South, and on March the 22nd the Knittels and Nurse Smith took their leave of the faithful Jusef and went off in the Napier on their journey of over three hundred kilometres to Sétif, meaning to sleep there and on the following day to go on to Algiers. The Arthur Collinses would follow by train with Tayeb and Lady Teynham, who had attached herself to our party, and I had decided to camp through the desert from Biskra to Bou Saada, riding on horseback and spending five nights on the way. The Napier would eventually fetch me at Bou Saada and I should join the Knittels at the St. George.

My desert journey was a disaster, for this reason.

Lord Denman was at Biskra when we were, and had decided to make a desert journey into the South, taking a camp with him and spending some weeks in the wilds. I had engaged Jusef to manage my short journey to Bou Saada, and to make all the arrangements about bedding, food, camels, etc., for me. He was familiar with the route, and knew exactly where the water-wells were. I was sure I should be perfectly safe in his hands. Lord Denman knew nothing of this, and, having heard of Jusef's great journey to Timbuctoo, asked Jusef to come with him on his big expedition. Naturally Jusef was tempted by this suggestion, which would bring a lot of money to him if he could accept it, and he came to me and asked me to let him go with Lord Denman, promising that if I did he would engage a relation—he said "brother"—of his to take his place, who knew the route to Bou Saada "like his pocket," was familiar with every water-well on the way, and was a man of incorruptible honesty. A first-

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rate cook and camel-men were already engaged. "Abdou" would be in command of them.

In a weak, or good-natured, moment I gave heed to his prayers. I handed over Jusef to Lord Denman and I started on my journey with Abdou.

Disaster attended me.

I had a horse to ride with an Arab saddle. For the average European an Arab saddle is by no means comfortable, as the stirrups are so short that the rider's legs are held perpetually in a constrained position which most people unused to them find very fatiguing. Before starting I had insisted that we were to travel each day not a moment longer than six hours, three in the morning and three in the afternoon, with a stoppage for rest and food between the two stages. Jusef had promised that Abdou would see to this. I had, before they left, arranged with the Knittels to be fetched from Bou Saada by the Napier car on March the 28th. I was therefore obliged to cover my short desert journey in five days, as I started from Biskra on the morning of March the 23rd, the day after the Knittel's departure. I was assured that this could be done easily if my camp travelled for from five to six hours a day.

Promises and assurances, I soon found, had meant practically nothing.

Instead of knowing our shortest route, and where the water-wells were, Abdou knew nothing. He had never before made this journey. The food he had provided was appalling and almost uneatable. My camp-bed broke to pieces on the second night of the trip. We lost our way more than once, missed the water-wells and had to make long détours to find them, with the result that to reach Bou Saada on the appointed day I was forced to ride from nine to ten hours daily instead of from five to six. This exertion in great heat, combined with atrocious food which caused vomiting and diarrhoea, brought me very low, and I finally arrived in Bou Saada in a condition not far from collapse. I doubt if I should have got there at all if it hadn't been that the cook provided for me, a young Arab, was exceedingly sympathetic and helpful, and knew at least something about the direction in which Bou Saada lay. We managed to get there on the afternoon of the 28th. I paid off the camp, went into the little hotel, found that the Knittels had arrived with the car on the previous evening but were out in the oasis, stumbled upstairs to a bedroom, and, still in my riding-boots, flung myself on a bed in a state of prostration.

As I lay there I thought vaguely,

"Well, at any rate I'm here, and can rest, and shall this evening have a peaceful meal alone with Frances and John!"

Not a bit of it!

John soon turned up, looking radiant, and informed me that they

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had brought with them Madame Fleury Hérard and Major Black, who were looking forward to meeting me, and that a friend of Madame Hérard, called Oliver Baldwin, who was living just then in Bou Saada, was to join us as a guest at dinner. So we should be quite a jolly party!

My despair at this piece of news led me, I'm afraid, to one of my rare exhibitions of bad temper. I felt utterly unfit to "make company," and at first said I should not come down, but would eat in my bedroom. John was very sympathetic when he saw that I was really almost at an end of my forces, and in consequence I resolved that I would not be disagreeable and spoil the party by showing my dislike of what had been so cheerfully arranged, partly with a view to my expected enjoyment. I did come down to dinner. But I remember to this day the hideous effort it cost me to seem cheerful and sociable.

Oliver Baldwin was the son of the politician who became Prime Minister of England and Lord Baldwin. He is now Viscount Corvedale. He belongs to one of my clubs, the Bath Club, and since that dinner I have met him more than once at this club and had pleasant talks with him.

On the 29th, though I still felt unwell and exhausted, we set off in the car for Algiers with John at the wheel. We lunched at Aumale and then ran into a terrific thunder and hail storm which made the road very dangerous, as we had to travel for forty kilometres over a difficult pass with multitudes of hairpin bends. However, at last we reached the St. George, and in a spirit of thankfulness I entered my charming bedroom there, and announced firmly that I should dine upstairs in my sitting-room and then go at once to bed.

I did not recover for three days. And on April the 3rd we left Africa at six o'clock in the evening in a crowded boat, with the Arthur Collinses, Lady Teynham, Tayeb, and nearly all the guests we had met with at the St. George.

During the voyage somebody on deck, seeing little Doreen seated demurely in a deck-chair, asked her what her name was. She replied,

"Doween after Mister 'Itchins!"

XVIII

On arriving at Marseilles we stayed at the Hôtel de Noailles, since burnt down, for one night, and then left for Lyons, Geneva, Montreux and Basel, where Mrs. Knittel remained with the children to see

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John's people. I went back to Montreux and John left for Rome to see his sister-in-law, Isabelle White, who was living there and studying singing with an Italian maestro.

At the end of April we all left Switzerland *en route* for England. At Dover we separated. I travelled to Falmouth to visit my mother, who was ill there, and the Knittels went to our new home, Wittersham House, Wittersham, on the Sussex border, which I had rented furnished from Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton for a couple of years. At Dover, thank heaven, we shed Nurse Smith and "the Smith Stomach." She was met by her brother and, as Mrs. Knittel wrote in her diary, left our service and went off "without a word."

As my mother, who was now over eighty, seemed to get better, I was soon able to leave Cornwall, and in May we were all settled in Wittersham, with John's father, of whom I was very fond, staying with us for a time as a much appreciated guest.

Wittersham House was the fifth furnished house I had rented in England since I had lived with the Knittels, and I think it was the most attractive of them all. It had been the country home of the Honourable Alfred Lyttelton, the great sportsman and politician, till his death. He was married first to the sister of Lady Oxford, and afterwards to Miss Balfour. His son, Oliver Lyttelton, has now made a big name for himself in the political world.

Wittersham House was a large, but not too large, Georgian country mansion, standing in a serene landscape, with a garden containing a lawn-tennis court and a croquet-lawn. Near by were the Sussex marshes spreading away towards the sea, and tenanted by busily feeding sheep. Winchelsea and Rye were within reach. We were in the depths of the country and yet not far from London. And we had a few neighbours whom we soon got to know. Among them were the brilliant critic and poet, Mr. Arthur Symons, and his wife; Mr. Norman Forbes, the well-known actor and brother of Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, with his wife and family; Colonel and Mrs. Carruthers (Miss Violet Markham, the writer and ardent worker for all good causes that appealed to her heart and brain); Lady Maude Warrender and her children; Miss Ellen Terry and her clever daughter, Miss Edith Craig; Miss Marjorie Bowen, the novelist; and, in the distance, but near enough to be visited by motor, the world-famous writer, Joseph Conrad. I only met him once, and will describe that remarkable episode almost directly. I shall never forget it.

We had now given up our horses but we had a motor-car. John had become an excellent chauffeur.

In Wittersham House the Knittels' third and last child, Margaret, was born, and there John wrote his second novel, *A Traveller in the Night.*

While we were in possession of Wittersham House we saw a good

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deal of Arthur Symons, and I sometimes took country walks with him. He was frail, or at any rate seemed frail, was exquisitely sensitive, gentle in manner, and full of interesting talk about Verlaine, the famous French poet, whom he had introduced to London literary circles in the past. He always seemed to be moving softly along the fringes of life, and mentally dwelling usually in days that were dead. His fame as a critic should live long. He was a man of infinite delicacy. It was he who brought John and me into contact with Joseph and Mrs. Conrad.

Several times he said to me, "You ought to know Joseph Conrad. You really must know Joseph Conrad. He is living now not far from Canterbury. We must arrange for you to pay him a visit."

I ventured to say that, though naturally I should be interested to meet the famous Pole, I had no reason to suppose that he was panting to catch sight of me.

Arthur Symons only reiterated that Conrad and I *must* meet.

I hate intruding on celebrities unless I am quite certain that they wish to meet me, and I had always understood that Joseph Conrad was by no means an "easy man." Some friends of mine, Lady Millais and her son Sir John Millais, whom I had several times visited at their house in Kent, had known Conrad very well when he lived near them before he took the house not far from Canterbury, but they had never suggested my meeting him. I fancied, perhaps without reason, that he was rather a recluse. But one day Arthur Symons asserted,

"I have been with the Conrads and he *wishes* to know you and so does his wife. When will Knittel and you drive me over to spend an afternoon with them? We can go there in your motor."

Finding, as I supposed, that this meant a real desire on Conrad's part to make my acquaintance, I agreed to go if a day could be fixed. And one afternoon Symons, John and I motored over to the Conrads' house in the grounds of Mrs. Bell's Park, not far from Canterbury.

It was a gloomy day, of the extremely moist type so characteristic of England when autumn is stealthily drawing near, and I remember that, as we drove, I felt slightly apprehensive. I had, of course, read much of what Joseph Conrad had written, and greatly admired his talent, and the wonderful power he had shown in conquering our difficult language and moulding it to serve as a vehicle for his strange and totally un-English imagination. But how would he strike me as man?

I don't think I am socially shy as a rule, but some people have the faculty of inducing shyness in me. However, as Joseph Conrad, according to Arthur Symons, was so very desirous of meeting me, no doubt he would be very charming and kind to me.

We reached the gate of his garden and drove up to the house. Exactly as we did so Joseph Conrad appeared on the threshold, and

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instantly I was aware that Arthur Symons had deceived me, no doubt unintentionally, and that I was the very last person Mr. Conrad was anxious to meet.

I can't tell what made me know this, but I did know it. And I was right. I discovered this later when I had a conversation with Hugh Walpole, the novelist. I don't mean to imply that Conrad had, without seeing me, taken a violent dislike to me. I merely mean that he had no interest in me and didn't want to be bothered with me.

I am far from blaming him for that.

On that day Mr. Conrad had, to me, the air of a man anxious to be polite, anxious even probably to appear welcoming, but forced to act a part he was certainly not feeling.

I was surprised at first by his extraordinarily strong foreign accent. He had acquired English. He talked English, and wrote it, as we all know, admirably. But I have seldom heard anyone speak our language in a more foreign way. While I was with him I heard him say a very few words in French, and I feel sure his accent in French was much better than his accent when speaking English.

He looked, I thought, very unwell and nervously "strung up" as we met him. I felt even sorry for him because he had to pretend satisfaction at our arrival. And I knew I should be at my worst with him.

Emphatically I was at my worst with him.

Something in Conrad seemed to paralyse my mind.

When he had escorted us into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Conrad was stretched out on a sort of invalid's couch with one suffering limb extended, and I was placed on a chair beside it, I sought in vain for some subject of conversation that would not cause irritation to our supersensitive host. Arthur Symons did not help me. He said practically nothing. John, I believe, could have got on far better with Conrad than I ever could, but he didn't say much. I have the impression that they both left it to me to deal with the great man. And I was not up to it.

We were given a sumptuous tea. Mrs. Conrad was very kind, even smiling. But conversation didn't flow. It seemed to congeal.

Conrad was an aristocratic-looking man with a pointed beard and was gouty withal. One only had to look at his hands to see that. His expression, highly intelligent, was also highly irritable. He looked as if something inside him was continually whispering, "I can't stand much more of this!" I found myself doing the unforgivable thing, uttering bromides and asking him questions. It is on record that, hearing that he had not long before visited, I think, Corsica, I inquired what his reactions had been on returning to Canterbury. To this, stung by my impotence, he replied,

"Mr. Hichens, my reactions are not *stereotyped*!"

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I then remarked how small the world was, and that, in consequence, one kept running up against somebody whom one knew.

His remarkable eyebrows seemed almost to fly upward at this terrible bromide, and he made no comment except an almost furious "Ah!" He had evidently by this time given me up as a conversationalist.

After tea—I forget why—I went alone with him for a moment to the garden, and afterwards into his writing-room. In the latter I made some remark about the hard work he must do there, and he said, with a despairing wave of the hand, "Of course! Of course! What else have I to do in this place but write—and write—and write?"

His voice sounded like the voice of a victim. Indeed, I believe that if ever there has been a victim to the terrible career Joseph Conrad was that victim.

In the end he triumphed. Critical and highly competent men acclaimed him as a great writer. He even made money after suffering many privations. And I was glad. He deserved his success.

But long afterwards Hugh Walpole told me I was right about his not having wanted to meet us. Arthur Symons, it seemed, had insisted upon it. Why?

When finally we left the house I said to Knittel and Symons, "I think after this I shall give up the society of my kind and become an anchorite."

I believe both of them were inclined to agree that this would be a wise proceeding on my part.

After this disastrous visit it took me a good while to achieve any social aplomb. Joseph Conrad had completely deflated me.

I realized that his wife had a strong sense of satirical humour when, after his death, I read the book which she wrote about him. One little episode she related made me know the man and understand why he had laid me out.

On her wedding day, as she and Conrad after being married were leaving in a cab, or carriage, for the honeymoon, or whatever took the honeymoon's place, a Polish man friend of his presented her with a bouquet tied with the Polish colours. Directly they were left to themselves in the carriage, without saying a word Conrad seized the bouquet from her hand and flung it into the street.

Hugh Walpole, who was very fond of Conrad, as he was of most celebrated people, told me that once, when he was staying over Sunday with him and his wife, the clergyman of the parish in which they lived was invited to supper. During the meal the clergyman said something in praise of Russian writers. On this Conrad flew into a violent passion, and struck the dining-table with his clenched fists, protesting against what the poor young man had innocently said—forgetting, perhaps, that he was supping with a passionate Pole.

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Remembering this, I have often felt glad that Conrad died before Hitler decided to murder Poland.

How different was that other neighbour of ours while we lived at Wittersham, the far-famed Ellen Terry!

I have often wondered how she could have "abided" me after *The Medicine Man*, a play which I think she really detested. But, when I came to know her better, and two or three times had the pleasure of taking her out for a drive in my motor-car, she behaved as if *The Medicine Man* had never had any existence. When I think of that subtle quality we call "charm" in women, I always find myself thinking of Millicent Duchess of Sutherland and Ellen Terry, great lady and great actress.

I believe Ellen Terry was difficult, if not impossible, to live with, yet it seemed that everyone loved her. Her sister, Marion, whom we knew so well, said as much to me. Ellen Terry was full of whims and caprices, but she was a generous, warm-hearted being, and full, too, of the milk of human kindness, which indeed in her case amounted to cream. She had a habit of carrying—I might almost say lugging—a large bag about with her everywhere. She brought it into my motor. It seemed over-filled with I know not what; her last will and testament, people said, her bank-book, manuscripts of plays writers had sent her to read, her spectacle-case, the family Bible perhaps. At odd moments it would burst suddenly open as if in protest at being so crammed, and there was a struggle to shut it again.

When I knew her fairly well, Ellen Terry suffered greatly from her eyes, and seemed at moments to be nearly blind. She gave me quite as much suggestion of blindness as Doctor Axel Munthe did when I knew him in Egypt. For Doctor Munthe sometimes seemed suddenly to see—especially when a pretty woman appeared in the offing.

Marion Terry, of whom we were all very fond, came to stay with us at Wittersham. While she was with us it happened that I knew Ellen Terry was living at her country cottage not far off. I told Marion Terry of this, and she said she had not seen "Nell" for ages and would love to meet her. The sisters were friends, but it seemed that they did not see much of each other in the busy life of London. We asked Ellen Terry to lunch "to meet your sister Marion." She accepted and I went to fetch her with the motor. The two sisters fell into each other's arms. We had a lively lunch, and afterwards I had the privilege of being photographed in the garden between them. Looking at them in this photograph it is rather difficult to believe that they were two of the most exquisite actresses England has produced. Ellen was no doubt the greater, but Marion was generally quite perfect in the parts she undertook. The last time I saw her on the stage she played an American Princess in Maugham's brilliant comedy,

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Our Betters. She only had one big chance in it towards the end of the piece, but when that chance came she rose to it in a way that made one forget all the cleverness of the players who surrounded her.

During our first summer at Wittersham we had several visitors, and also had people who came to play lawn-tennis and croquet. On one occasion the friend of ours whom we always called "Bobbie Black," and whom we had met in North Africa, came to spend the day with his wife, Lady Marcia. Some of us played lawn-tennis.

Lady Marcia sat looking on till Mrs. Knittel said tentatively, "Perhaps you like croquet?"

"Yes; I play croquet sometimes."

"Then let us have a game."

A four was arranged and the game started, "all against all."

After only three or four strokes Lady Marcia took a couple of hoops, hit an opponent's ball, and then, playing in a masterly manner never seen by any of us before, took entire charge of the match, passed through every hoop, making cruel use of the ball first struck, hit first one stick and then the other, and with inexorable composure made an end of the game.

It turned out on inquiry that she was the champion croquet-player of Ireland, and had been champion for three years running.

XIX

The Garden of Allah was at last produced in London at Drury Lane, at the end of June in the year 1920, while we were living at Wittersham House. I had a flat in Cork Street as well as our country home at this time, for of course I was obliged to be present at all the long and elaborate rehearsals. Madame de Navarro and her husband were also in London for them in a flat at Knightsbridge, and we met and consulted together every day, and went through all the fluctuations of anticipation and despair, of satisfaction and hopelessness, that every big production in an important theatre causes to arise in the author, or authors, of the play that is being got ready.

The script was not read to the company by us. I don't know whether it was read to the actors and actresses by anyone, but I remember very well the first rehearsal, which took place in a large upstairs room somewhere in the huge building, a room called, I think, the "rotunda." Some chairs were placed in a row for us, Arthur Collins and two or three others, facing other chairs occupied by the

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company, who all arrived with their parts in their hands, and the great ordeal began.

How cold-blooded that first rehearsal seemed to me! The company had not mastered their words. Evidently that was not expected of them. They read from their scripts monotonously, and I wondered about the dialogue. I sat next to Arthur Collins, and was acutely conscious all the time, now that we were in London and away from the African light and the African magic of Biskra, that he still had no belief in the play. Perhaps he was right in his unbelief. Yet I remembered the colossal financial success in America and tried to take comfort from that memory.

Madame de Navarro shared none of my sensations that morning. She had always been enthusiastic about the play, and what had happened in America had naturally confirmed her in her faith in it. Also her long experience as a successful stage star had accustomed her to the cold and piecemeal preliminaries which precede the "taking shape" of an elaborate production.

"Don't worry, Roberto!" she whispered to me when she saw the tell-tale wrinkles appear on my brow. "It will come out all right!"

We continued to rehearse during the first week or two in the rotunda, and before very long the fur began to fly, as Madame de Navarro, though always kind and cordial, having been a leading star both in New York and London some decades ago, was critical about diction and acting, and expressed her views politely but firmly. Miss Madge Titheridge, whose methods were entirely modern, objected to this more than once; and on one memorable occasion was heard to say that, though no doubt the acting of the past century had been perfectly marvellous, times had changed since then, and nowadays audiences didn't want lines to be "ladled out to them."

Sometimes while the English players were at work in one part of the theatre I was assisting at the rehearsals of the Arabs in another part, and I was astonished at their quickness in understanding what was wanted of them, and at the almost passionate vigour they threw into their performances.

The native music was rehearsed in another room, from which now and then the familiar sound of tom-toms came to my ears. And Sir Landon Ronald's specially composed music was gone through by him with the Drury Lane orchestra.

Arthur Collins took charge of the sandstorm which had caused such havoc among the audiences in New York. It did some damage also in London, for my friend, Sir StClair Thomson, told me later on that during the night when he saw the play his evening clothes were smothered with sand.

For weeks we were "at it," and gradually the play began to emerge from chaos. But Arthur Collins remained completely doubtful about

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its success. He thought it too religious, and said that the end was much too tragic for Drury Lane audiences.

Meanwhile every day our camels, accompanied by the baby regarded as our mascot, solemnly paraded the streets of London, emerging from their near-by stable. And it was at this time that the agitated spinster, who was to be one of our best publicity agents, kicked up such a dust about what she asserted was our "starvation" of the baby and his majestic companions. For a few days the papers were full of this, and Arthur Collins was delighted at the ridiculous accusation.

"It's as good for us as it is for a novelist to have his book called pornographic by an Archbishop," he said. "Up go the sales immediately!"

The camels were not the only livestock destined to take part in our drama. Sheep, goats and dogs had been also brought into the cast by Arthur Collins. And I seem to remember some horses.

Madame de Navarro was nervous about these four-legged performers and expressed her anxiety to me several times.

"I don't like animals on the stage," she said. "One never knows what they may do. And"—she lowered her voice—"nearly always they do it!"

"Perhaps they wish to give a touch of realism to the play," I answered. "Anyhow, Arthur Collins is determined to have them."

"I dread the first night!" she murmured.

Arthur Collins was immersed in matters connected with the production, which was on magnificent lines but quite different from the New York production. On the whole, I preferred what we were given in London, but in one respect George Tyler completely surpassed Arthur Collins. That was in the night scene in the desert, with the starry sky watching over the lovers and melting gradually into the grey light of dawn. George Tyler's stars had seemed to hang in the dim blue space of the firmament. Arthur Collins's stars, as Tony de Navarro pointed out with great perspicacity, looked like a rash which had broken out on the bosom of night and needed the immediate attention of a qualified doctor.

"Just look at it, Roberto! It's just simply a rash!"

We ventured to remonstrate with Arthur Collins about these ignoble stars, and reminded him of the wonderful effect in New York which he had witnessed, unless by the time it was reached he had fallen asleep from the sheer boredom induced by the play. But he was exceedingly "touchy" when his production was criticized and said Drury Lane needed no lessons from the New Century Theatre. So the rash was not cured.

The scene of the garden was very beautiful, and Collins introduced in it a delicious effect of water murmuring perpetually among the sandy rills beneath the masses of palm trees. This effect, however,

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had to be cut out as the actors complained that it distracted the attention of the audience from them.

Unfortunately my dear mother's health at this time got much worse and I was beginning to be extremely anxious about her. I should have gone again to see her at Falmouth if my presence at the rehearsals hadn't been considered absolutely necessary, but one day when I arrived to rehearse I received a telegram addressed to me at the theatre, which stated that her life was despaired of. This, of course, decided me. I must leave at once. I told Madame de Navarro and Arthur Collins the sad news and departed, leaving John Knittel, who was with me, to represent me while I was away. I did this because I had a feeling that, unless I did it, something calamitous might be decided upon which I shouldn't approve of with regard to the play.

"If they want to make any change in the play without consulting me," I said to John, "wire to me at once and fully."

He promised to do this, and I packed and caught the night train to Falmouth.

My curious instinct proved to be well founded. Soon after I reached Falmouth, John telegraphed to me that Arthur Collins, apparently with the concurrence of Madame de Navarro, proposed to cut out the entire last act of the play, which included the final farewell of Domini and the Monk at the gate of the Trappist monastery, and to produce it ending with the scene of the Monk's confession.

I realized at once that to do this would be a crazy proceeding and must wreck the play, and I wired to Collins absolutely forbidding him to alter the end, and ordering him to leave it exactly as we had rehearsed it when I was in London. This telegram saved the situation, but I believe it caused my friend John to have a very unpleasant quarter of an hour. The play was produced as I wished just before my dear mother was buried, and I read the critiques in Falmouth.

One, which slated it severely, appeared in the *Westminster Gazette*, my friend Alfred Spender's paper. I can't remember it very well now, but I believe it implied that our drama was a mere menagerie, only worth attention from those who delighted in the animal world.

When I got back to London Spender met me and said that the article in question had appeared in the paper before he had seen it, and that when he had read it he ordered it to be eliminated from the later editions. I understood from him that it had been written by Mr. Aldous Huxley. Spender seemed quite agitated about it, but I begged him not to worry on my account, and assured him that I was not so sensitive as many authors seem to be about attacks in the newspapers. What I was sensitive about was the demand for seats at the box office, and I had already seen for myself that Drury Lane was bombarded by crowds of people clamouring to buy them. So my withers were unwrung by the attack in the *Westminster Gazette*.

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From the first night the play was an enormous financial success, and the prophecies of Arthur Collins were entirely falsified. The takings for seats were, I believe, for a long time up to six thousand pounds every week, and Collins told me afterwards that *The Garden of Allah* was one of the greatest money-makers Drury Lane ever had, in spite of its tragic ending. Golding Bright's firm belief in it was amply justified, and Madame de Navarro was triumphant.

Nevertheless I must confess that I could never bring myself to consider it a really good play.

I only sat through it once at Drury Lane, but sometimes at night I walked to the entrance of the theatre and stood for a moment looking at the placards outside with "House Full" printed upon them.

Two short words that never fail to gladden the heart of a dramatist who decides to judge of his work by results.

XX

DURING my lease of Wittersham House I had a good deal to do with the theatre, for John Knittel, perhaps inspired by his experiences at Drury Lane, became strongly attracted to the theatre and eventually began to write for it. But before this new development came about we had another pleasant time in Switzerland.

We decided to get out of England for the winter and went to Pontresina, where for the first and last time I attempted to ski, and from there to St. Moritz, where we came across Hall Caine, who was writing a book in the Palace Hotel. We established ourselves in the quiet and small Villa du Château which was well run by a Baron von Schacky.

I introduced the Knittels to Hall Caine, who received us all cordially and asked us to dinner. We went and had a lively and interesting evening, during which he told us a great deal about his long and intimate association with the poet Rossetti.

Although Hall Caine was, I think, like Beerbohm Tree, a decided *poseur*, and prided himself upon his supposed resemblance to two of the greatest figures in the history of mankind, I always found him very kind and disposed to be friendly. He showed this on the day after our dinner with him, for, meeting Mrs. Knittel on her morning walk with the babies, he insisted on our coming to tea with him in the afternoon, and, as Frances said afterwards, he was "very interesting and amusing until he began talking about his war services."

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Well, we all have our weaknesses. One of Hall Caine's was a perhaps rather constant preoccupation about himself as a celebrity bearing a name that was known to millions.

Once, at a dinner given by Mrs. Charles Hunter in Marienbad, Beerbohm Tree shot a few mildly barbed arrows at this target.

It was a large dinner-party. Sir Charles Wyndham and Miss Mary Moore were at it, as well as Beerbohm Tree, the Duke of Beaufort, of course Mr. Hunter as well as our hostess, and a number of others. Beerbohm Tree sat exactly opposite to me, having as his neighbour the Duke of Beaufort, who was a very large and solid hunting man, utterly unlike his musical brother, Lord Henry Somerset, whom I had met long ago at Clifton.

When dinner was over Mrs. Hunter said to Beerbohm Tree, who seemed to be in tearing spirits, "Do give us something, won't you?"

"Of course, my dear friend!" he replied, rising at once to his feet.

And he proceeded to give us an inimitable imaginary account of King Edward the Seventh being shown over the Isle of Man by Mr. Hall Caine, who had a castle there.

He described the King being conducted to all the beauty spots in the midst of excitedly cheering crowds, whom Hall Caine tried to restrain by lifting a hand and murmuring, "No, no, my dear friends, don't trouble about me today! Give all your attention to His Majesty. The King is among us. Today I take second place!"

At the end of the visit Beerbohm Tree described the novelist as gracefully falling at the King's feet, and resting there on one knee looking expectantly upward, whereupon His Majesty stretched out an arm and exclaimed in a loud voice, "Rise, *Mister* Hall Caine!"

Later on, of course, Hall Caine *did* receive the honour of knighthood.

While Beerbohm Tree was amusing us with this extremely entertaining invention the Duke of Beaufort, who evidently couldn't conceive what it was all about and why we were laughing, sat gazing up at him with an expression of blank astonishment on his large countenance. No smile came on his lips, and our peals of laughter seemed simply to puzzle him.

At St. Moritz, among many other people assembled to enjoy winter sports, I met Lady Ribblesdale, formerly Mrs. John Jacob Astor, whom I had known in London. She was famous in St. Moritz as an intrepid sportswoman, who had more than once been down the Cresta Run. In Pontresina we had met Mrs. Eben Pyke, whose portraits of well-known people appeared regularly in the *Tatler*. She did a clever portrait of John Knittel for this paper.

While we were at St. Moritz John and I projected making a tour in the south of Spain before going back to Wittersham, but he was unexpectedly summoned to Rome by his sister-in-law, who was living

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there with Maude Valérie White and Maude's sister, Mrs. White, so we had to give up the idea and I went to Montreux to await John's return. By March the 17th we were once more in Wittersham, having been away since October.

The Knittel's third child, Margaret, was born there on April the 9th. And about three weeks later, perhaps to compensate ourselves for having given up Spain, John and I left England for El Kantara to make a short trip into the adjoining desert.

This trip was not quite a success.

We arrived at El Kantara at the beginning of May. We counted, of course, on having splendid weather, as it scarcely ever rains in that part of Algeria after April is over. But we had no luck.

Having reached the dear little Hôtel Bertrand in the gorge, and been warmly welcomed, we began to get a camping equipment together, with tents, mules and Arabs, and when everything was ready we set off into the desert in the best of spirits.

After a long day's ride towards the mountains we camped at the edge of an *oued*, or dry bed of a river, and after eating our supper stretched ourselves on our camp-beds and fell fast asleep.

In the dead of the night we both woke up and, to our amazement, heard torrents of rain pouring down on the canvas roof. Presently, mingling with this, we heard a much more sinister sound, a dull roar which, as we listened, seemed to get every moment louder.

"What on earth's that?" I said. "It sounds like a river."

At this moment our Arab guide pushed up the tent flap and said we must get up at once and break camp, or we should probably be drowned. A river was roaring down the *oued* and with every moment the water was rising. We hurried into our clothes: the tent-pegs were hastily pulled up and the tents folded and strapped on the mules. We mounted and made for the mountains, having to ford the river, which was by no means an easy job. However, we got through, and when day came encamped in a rocky nook where we were partially sheltered from the rain. We hoped it would quickly cease, but it persisted, and eventually we were driven out of our nook and were forced to make an attempt to get back to El Kantara. After many difficulties, and fording several watercourses with the water up to the girths of our mules, we at last reached the Hôtel Bertrand in a state of almost complete exhaustion, and of course drenched to the skin.

Soon afterwards, as the floods persisted, we left by train for Constantine, and eventually, after a stay in Algiers at our old haunt the St. George Hotel, got back to Wittersham and the new baby on June the 7th. John arrived with a very bad cold, but we both looked well, and John informed Frances and the baby that Bob was as tough as an old mule.

John's first novel, *Aaron West*, came out about this time and had

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some very good criticisms, but others made such fun of his hero's extraordinary proceedings and conduct generally that the author of them laughed till his sides ached. One long article, which came out in *The Pink 'Un*, a famous sporting paper, specially amused us, and had as its title, "Ugly Aaron's Way With Women." This was the book which Lord Northcliffe personally reviewed in *The Times*. There was a good review in the *Westminster Gazette*.

John was naturally enormously encouraged by this, but something else occurred that woke up his mind and his whole nature to unusual activity.

It was something quite unexpected.

As I wanted to see a little of London that season I again took a flat for two months or so in Cork Street. And while I was there I went to the Shaftesbury Theatre to see a Russian Jewish actor who was having a great success in a play called *The Great Lover*. Sir Herbert Tree had spoken to me about this play, which he had been about to produce when he suddenly died, after an operation performed on his return from a visit to America. This Jewish actor had already made a sensation, acting for the first time in English the part of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. But I had never seen him in this, I had only heard of him.

I was completely captivated by Mr. Moscovitch's great lover, and went to see him a second time. When the play was over I could not resist going round to the stage door, sending in my card and asking whether I could speak to him for a moment. He replied asking me to come to his dressing-room. I went and we finally made friends.

My enthusiasm naturally pleased him, as it was so genuine, and he knew I had been a journalist for some years, had written regularly on an influential paper, and was part author of *The Garden of Allah* play which had had such a success at Drury Lane Theatre.

Moscovitch had an exceedingly strong personality and had certainly the makings of a great actor in our English language had he stuck to our stage and surrounded himself with a first-rate company. In *The Great Lover* he had as leading lady an actress whom I thought worse than second-rate, yet in spite of that he carried the play to success by his extraordinary talent, which was mingled with something like fascination. I went away from London to Wittersham with my mind full of him, told John about my discovery and said, "You simply *must* see him!"

I had long been convinced that John had a great deal of talent for dramatic writing, and had even urged him to devote all his time to work for the stage. I had represented to him that by dealing only with dialogue he would avoid the great difficulty of having to conquer a good prose style in a language foreign to him. (For he wrote always in English.) However, he was so fascinated by novels that I could not induce him to take my advice—until he saw Moscovitch act in *The*

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Great Lover and made acquaintance with him. We invited him to spend a night—Sunday—with us at Wittersham, bringing his wife with him.

John had a long talk alone with him, and when they had left us on Monday afternoon announced, "I am going to write a play for Moscovitch."

John went up to London, they consulted together several times, and the scheme of a play was decided on. It was to be a drama in a Swiss setting and the name chosen for it was *The Torch.* Having discussed all the preliminaries with Moscovitch, John set to work with the intention of having the play finished for the following year.

In September Isabelle White left for Rome, and early in October Frances Knittel and the three children went by steamer and train to Montreux-Territet, where we had taken a large flat vacated by Prince and Princess Nicholas of Greece, who had been living there in exile but now were able to go back to Athens. We rented it furnished and meant to spend another winter in Switzerland. John and I travelled by motor-car and took six days on the journey, staying *en route* at various towns, including Rouen, where we ate the most perfect dinner that I have ever eaten in all my long life. This culinary event took place in a famous restaurant just behind the chief theatre of the city. The servants followed us by train, and after a brief stay in the Grand Hôtel Territet we settled into our flat for the winter.

In Montreux we met a new set of people. At a tea given by Princess Salm I was introduced to subjects of no less than fifteen different nations. In those days Montreux was one of the most cosmopolitan places in Switzerland, and decidedly amusing to stay in.

Among those we came to know well were Baron Sir Rudolph Slatin Pasha; two interesting Russian sisters, Countess Stackelberg and Baroness Knorring; Count and Countess Lützow; Monsieur and Madame Drucker; Monsieur Botkine, a Russian diplomat, and his handsome American wife; Colonel McNeile, who was so tremendously popular as a writer under the pen-name of "Sapper," and his wife; Madame Wagnière, an American, and her daughter Mrs. Horton; Monsieur Romain Rolland, the famous French author; and others. We also met Mademoiselle Dostoievsky, the only daughter of the great Russian novelist.

My social connection with her was rather curious. I had known her before I settled in Montreux, having been in her company several times at Taormina in Sicily, but I had not seen her for a good many years.

While I was in England I published a book called *The Spirit of the Time*, the chief character in which was a Russian woman, a member of the aristocracy in exile. She was drawn by me as a not very sympathetic character, and after the book came out I received a violent protest from Mademoiselle Dostoievsky, telling me that she thought it cruel of me to "attack" the unfortunate Russians who had been ex-

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pelled from, or had escaped out of, their country. This letter reached me from my publisher and was addressed from a hotel in Territet.

I answered it with good temper, saying I was sorry to have hurt her Russian feelings, but pointing out that in drawing one Russian character who had some faults I had had no intention of attacking a whole nation, and explaining that, as it happened, I was specially attracted by Russians, and that one of my dearest friends, now dead, had been Princess Anna Obolensky, with whom I had travelled in Egypt, and who had translated, and published at her own expense, my *Garden of Allah* in Russian. I added that I was shortly coming to Territet and would call upon her.

In her letter she had written that, like many Russians, she was now very poor, and that she thought no Englishman ought to hit those who were down. Because of this I asked her to let me write a letter to *The Times* about her financial troubles and suggest that the innumerable English intellectuals who admired and loved her famous father might like to join with me in helping her. I was absolutely certain that there would be an instant response to such an appeal.

She answered this more temperately, but absolutely refused to let me make any appeal in *The Times*. Her father, she wrote, would have hated her receiving financial help from people merely because they loved and admired his writings.

"Don't do it!" she wrote.

Of course I obeyed this command.

As soon as I was settled with the Knittels in our flat I called upon Mademoiselle Dostoievsky. She is now dead and I have no wish to be unkind in discussing her. But if I am to be truthful I must state that she had a decidedly difficult character, and was one of the very few Russians—and I have known a great many—with whom I could never feel very intimate sympathy.

Her personality, though she was intelligent, was not attractive. In appearance she was very like photographs I have seen of her father, as Countess Tatiana Tolstoy is extraordinarily like her father, Count Tolstoy. Countess Tatiana is highly cultivated, and I like and admire her greatly, and often wish I had seen much more of her, but Mademoiselle Dostoievsky had a rather peevish and petulant manner, and seemed more anxious to convince me that her father had belonged to the *petite noblesse* of Russia than to hear my enthusiastic admiration of his genius expressed to her.

As she was in real difficulties for money, after a good deal of urging I persuaded her to accept a sum that she said would discharge the debt she owed to the hotel where she was living, and I invited her, of course, to come to our flat.

Almost immediately after her visit I had a note from her, in which she wrote that she had long thought it a great pity that no *salon* existed

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in Montreux, no "centre" where people interested in intellectual matters and current literature could meet. She now wished to do something to make good this lack, and was giving a reception with tea in the following week. Would I come and bring any friends I liked with me?

Rather amused, but not entirely surprised, for I had had a good deal of experience of Russian caprices, I accepted and on the appointed day went. Mademoiselle Dostoievsky was surrounded by people and proved to be an excellent hostess, dispensing to us tea, delicious cakes, and even ices.

She kindly gave me the Life which she wrote of her famous father. This was reviewed in papers of all the countries of Europe, in the chief English papers and all over America. I hope it brought her in a large sum of money eventually, but she very often complained to me about the reviews and showed me a good many of them. Nearly all of them were long. And as an "old hand" in the writing world I was able to assure her that it was often more to an author's advantage to have a long, even cruel, review than a praising one that was short. This seemed to console her a good deal, but she was very sensitive and "touchy" about herself and her book.

Sir Rudolph Slatin Pasha, who became one of our most appreciated friends in Switzerland, was, like a good many famous men of action, totally free from pretence. He was an Austrian, who as well as an Austrian title had an English one, which he dropped on account of the war when his country fought against England. For many years he had been held captive, often in chains, in the Soudan by the Mahdi, who had treated him as a slave. Finally he had escaped and arrived in Cairo penniless and in rags. He told me that sometimes the Mahdi had forced him to run like a dog after his horse, when that ruffian went out for a ride. Afterwards he became a great warrior, governed a Province in the Soudan, occupied a palace at Khartoum, had a legendary name in Africa, was the intimate friend of King George the Fifth, with whom he stayed at Balmoral, and even after the war was honoured by all Englishmen who knew him. He had no conceit or vanity in him. In conversation he was witty, had a great sense of fun and was exceedingly genial. Everyone who knew him seemed to like him, and he was universally respected and admired by men.

One evening I gave a dinner at the Grand Hôtel, to which one of my best friends, Marguerite Horton, half Swiss, half American, came. As I knew she appreciated good company I put her at dinner between Slatin Pasha and Colonel McNeile. I had introduced both of them to her when they arrived, and thought I had spoken clearly. But it was a large party and I had been surrounded by guests. When Mrs. Horton was leaving she said to me,

"Who were the two delightful men I sat between at dinner?"

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"But surely you knew!" I said.

"No, I didn't. People were talking so loudly when you introduced them that I didn't catch their names, and neither of them gave me any hint as to who he was."

"The man on your right was the famous soldier, Slatin Pasha, and the one on your left was Colonel McNeile, or 'Sapper,' the author of *Bulldog Drummond* and lots of other popular books."

"Your friends ought to wear labels!" she exclaimed.

Sapper McNeile was extremely sociable, and took part in nearly all the activities that went on around him. We met him on the golf-course at Aigle. I played tennis against him indoors on wood, and on hard courts out of doors. He played bridge at the Cosmopolitan Club, drove his own car, was a first-rate dancer, especially when he danced with his tall graceful wife, acted in amateur theatricals, was a pillar of the Montreux men's club, and, in spite of the hard work he got through for the London publishers and the *Strand Magazine*, seemed to have time for everything. He was indeed what the English call "an all-round man." His stories for the *Strand Magazine* and other periodicals were extremely sensational, but I think he thoroughly believed in them when he wrote them.

One night, when his wife and he were living at the Montreux Palace Hotel, I went to dine with them. He came down carrying an addressed packet in his hand. I said,

"Another story?"

"Yes, my monthly one for the *Strand Magazine*."

"A thriller?"

"No."

"Something funny that you've been laughing over, as Dickens used to laugh over his delightful humour?"

"Laughing—no! I've been doing just the contrary!"

And I noticed sudden moisture coming into his generally lively eyes.

"Sapper" certainly believed in what he was doing. He was a brave man, as he proved when he was close to the death he was facing.

Our immediate neighbours in the building where our flat was on the first floor were Monsieur and Madame Botkine, and above them Count and Countess Henry Lützow.

I had known the Lützows in Rome, where he had been Austrian Ambassador at the Quirinal. Their Embassy was the most popular, the most hospitable, and the most brilliant in Rome, and both of them were liked by almost everybody. Countess Lützow was Dutch and was a delightful woman, to whom I became sincerely attached, and the Count had a great sense of humour, spoke English perfectly and knew how to enjoy life. He wrote and published two books in English, one of which he gave to me. Their life in a Territet flat must have seemed very narrow and ordinary to them both after the glories

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of their magnificent Roman Embassy, but they never complained about it to me, and showed some of the almost cheerful resignation so characteristic of the aristocratic Russian exiles in Switzerland.

One day when I visited the Lützows at tea-time I found a middle-aged man standing in the drawing-room with his back to the fire.

I shook hands with Countess Lützow, wondering who he was. She said, "I think you know Count Mensdorff, don't you?"

"He doesn't recognize me," said the man by the fire.

It was the former Austrian Ambassador in England, whom I had seen first long ago as a brilliant and gay young man at a ball in London, and later at many parties and in his box at the Covent Garden opera.

"Of course I do!" I said hastily, greeting him.

"Ah!" he said. "We live in a changed world now!"

"Yes," said Countess Lützow. "A little flat instead of a Roman Embassy!"

"A Montreux cinema instead of the Covent Garden opera-house!" I said.

"Do you know Vienna?" Count Mensdorff said.

"No," I said. "But I mean to go there."

"Ah? But you will never know the real Vienna now."

I have been to Vienna three or four times since then. But I am sure Count Mensdorff was right. The true Vienna no longer exists. It had already ceased to exist when I paid my first visit there. Yet even then I was able to imagine what an enchanting city it must have been.

Monsieur Botkine, who with his wife occupied the flat just above ours, had been the Russian Minister in Morocco and Portugal, and was the brother of the Tsar of Russia's doctor, who was assassinated with the Empress and all the Royal Family during the revolution. He was a clever, interesting man, and always excellent company. He spoke fluent English and, of course, French, and wrote French admirably. He contributed many articles to the Paris *Figaro* and other French newspapers, and also entertaining short stories, many of which he allowed me to read.

Madame Botkine is an American but completely cosmopolitan, whom I still have the pleasure of knowing and meeting sometimes in Switzerland. Her husband is dead.

It was at lunch in their flat that I met for the first time a Russian lady of whom I had often heard, whose name was known throughout Europe, and whose fate had been linked with romance and with almost unbearable tragedy. She was staying with the Botkines as a guest, and they kindly invited me to meet her.

This lady was Princess Paley, the widow of the Grand Duke Paul of Russia, to whom she had been married morganatically.

Before I came to know Princess Paley I had read a great deal about

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her, and had been deeply shocked at the terribly cruel tragedy which had brought all her good fortune and happiness to an awful end.

Married, for the second time, to the Grand Duke Paul of Russia, she had found in him a devoted husband who lavished on her everything that money could buy, and by whom she had three children, one of them a boy of unusual beauty, exceptional talent, amounting, many thought, to poetic genius, and gifted also with an extraordinarily charming nature. Her family life seems to have been perfect in its serenity and understanding. They had a lovely home near Paris, knew all the interesting people of that glorious capital, entertained and were entertained by them, had for a time, it seemed, everything good, or nearly everything, that life could offer.

It is true that the Grand Duke was banished at that time from Russia for having married a beautiful and fascinating woman who happened not to have been born a Royalty. But that does not seem to have weighed them down with affliction. Indeed, Princess Paley described her life in France to me as almost all that heart could desire.

Then the Grand Duke was allowed to return to Russia. Eventually the revolution broke out. He was murdered because he was a Grand Duke; the wonderful son was thrown alive into a quarry or limekiln in a forest in Russia, with the Grand Duchess Serge; and Princess Paley, after their deaths, with great difficulty escaped into Finland, where she was given an asylum in the house of my friend, Countess Stackelberg. While there she was very ill, and I believe had a severe operation. She recovered from this and eventually made her way back to Paris and took a house in the Rue de la Faisanderie. One of her daughters married Monsieur Lelong, the famous dressmaker; the other became Princess Theodore of Russia.

Princess Paley had enough money left to live on, and she banked in Switzerland, and stayed for a time above Territet in Caux, with the daughter who eventually married Prince Theodore, and who was then in delicate health. I visited them there several times; they came to see us when we had given up our flat and had taken a house, and I went with them both now and then to see interesting films at the Montreux cinemas.

Like nearly all the Russians I have known, Princess Paley was almost strangely uncomplaining, and never, when with me or in company where I was, touted for pity. Before I met her at lunch with the Botkines, when we were only four and therefore had general conversation, I had seen her once out walking alone without knowing who she was, and had wondered who this woman dressed in black, with the evidently once very beautiful face now stamped with an arresting impress of tragedy, might be. When I knew her she was so absolutely *femme du monde* that she, no doubt, instinctively disguised her deep-seated misery and gnawing regret for the past, and some-

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times seemed unaffectedly cheerful, though never gay. She had a most sympathetic personality and I always felt absolutely at ease with her, and even presently almost intimate with her. Two or three times she spoke to me very frankly about her experiences in Russia during the revolution, and her efforts to save her husband from death. I think she was, or perhaps had gradually become, entirely fatalistic. She never asked me to do anything for herself, but once she did ask me if I thought I could help a Russian friend of hers, whom I knew, and who was in terrible financial difficulties. This lady, who had been very rich, had sold everything of value she had been able to save when she fled from Russia except one jewel. This was a watch surrounded by diamonds and set in a bracelet. She had given it to Princess Paley to sell if possible. Princess Paley asked me if I could find anyone who would buy it. I inquired what it was supposed to be worth, and was told that the owner would be satisfied if she got eighty pounds for it, though more had been paid for it when it was bought. I took the watch, and fortunately was able to find a purchaser for it. Princess Paley seemed as delighted as if I had rescued her from some trouble. I saw a photograph taken of her when she was a young married woman and she was beautiful, not in a classical but in a singularly human and charming way. She must have been almost irresistible. When I was with them in Switzerland, Princess Theodore was unmarried. Princess Paley sent me an invitation to the wedding in Paris, but I could not go to it and I have never been to a Russian wedding. After Princess Paley died, from a return of the malady from which she had suffered in Finland, I met Princess Theodore again in Paris a few times, and lunched with her in her little house at Neuilly. She had inherited the sweetness and charm of her mother, and in Paris seemed to be incessantly occupied with doing good works. I was wintering in Paris to be treated by an American chiropractor for throat trouble. Unfortunately his energetic exertions did me no good. Since then, after studying that remarkable book *Psychic Phenomena* by Hudson, I have learnt how to help myself by auto-suggestion.

XXI

THAT winter the Moscovitches arrived in Montreux to join us, Moscovitch being prompted by his desire to consult again with John about "the play" which had been growing. There was plenty of snow while they were with us, and we all went up to Caux almost every day

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to enjoy the fun of tobogganing. After tobogganing down the long hill towards Glion and Territet we used to go up again to Caux by the funicular railway, and were more than once in a compartment with a party of sportive merry-makers whose chief seemed to be a sturdy clean-shaven Englishman with a slight hint of the Emperor Napoleon in his determined and self-possessed face. This party was staying in the Caux Palace Hotel.

Several times this Englishman looked at me and I looked at him, and one day, as we were preparing for our morning rush through the snow, he greeted me genially and we spoke a few words together.

The speaker, though I did not know it, was one of the most fantastically successful and prolific novelists and playwrights of his time, author of *The Ringer* and a multitude of other sensational novels, some of which he turned into plays. His name was Edgar Wallace.

He was always accompanied by a very slim and very young-looking girl, and by some other young people. I supposed them to be his children.

One day he spoke to me about my writing and told me who he was, and we had a short talk together. And I told him how one day, when I had gone into the chief bookshop of Montreux and was waiting for a book I had ordered, a young Englishman came into the shop, went up to the counter and said,

"I want five of the latest novels of Edgar Wallace."

He laughed when I said, "I am quite sure nobody on earth ever has asked, or ever will ask, in a shop for my five latest works."

"I guess I bring them out a bit quicker than you do," he said.

A little while after this I was obliged to pay a short visit to England, and on getting into the sleeping-car at the Montreux station I found Edgar Wallace and his party installed in it. Their Christmas holiday over, they were going home.

He saluted me with a smile, and very soon after the train started he appeared at the door of the compartment I was occupying alone, and asked me if he might come in and have a chat with me. I begged him, as the Americans say, to "come right in," and we had a conversation that must have lasted, I should think, for over two hours.

I found him an interesting man, and full of queer information about types with which I had little or nothing to do. He was entirely unpretentious, and told me of his very humble beginnings, and of his varied life as a private soldier abroad, and struggling journalist and author before he obtained his amazing financial success.

"I'm entirely what's called a self-made man," he said. "I'm not a high-brow. I write to please the big public, and to make as much money as possible without doing harm to anyone."

And he told me, half laughing, that he believed he knew personally nearly all the successful thieves in London.

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"And most of the police too!" he said. "I know both sides."

I asked him how he got hold of the dozens of plots on which he based his multitudinous novels.

"Partly experience," he said. "The rest just comes to me. I'm never at a loss for a plot."

I then asked him how he managed to produce a book in sometimes only a few days. He said he dictated lots of his work. Did I? I told him I had to write all my books laboriously pen in hand. He acknowledged that he sometimes spoke a book, or part of a book, into a dictaphone. His earnings were fabulous, but he spent his money not only freely but almost recklessly, and lived, as they say absurdly enough, "like a Prince." Evidently he thoroughly enjoyed his life and had the gambler's instinct. Racing was a passion with him and he had been an owner. I liked him and thoroughly enjoyed my long talk with him. At the end of it he said,

"Before we part I want to introduce you to my wife."

I was surprised and said, "Is she with you?"

"Sure!" he said. "Why, you've seen her with me!"

Then I realized that the slim girl I had thought was one of his children was his wife. I went with him to their compartment and was introduced to her. We met once more for a short time during the journey, and afterwards I received two cordial notes from his London address which I answered. But I went back to Switzerland without meeting him again, and that was the end of our connection. I always thought of him, however, with a feeling of friendship, and was sorry to hear of his premature death in Hollywood.

Another writer whom I knew really well, Reginald Berkeley, died suddenly in an almost similar way, when he was in Hollywood seeking his fortune. He was a gifted, clever and very determined man, with a talent both for writing and politics. If he had lived longer he might have gone far. He came over almost from the ends of the earth to help England in the last war, and when it was over stayed on and had much success. His comedy called *French Leave* drew all London to see it. But he would have had greater success still had his life been longer. He asked me once, when he was undecided whether to stay on in England and "try to write," or go back to the Islands whence he had come, which I advised him to do. I said,

"I advise you to stay here. I am positive you will have success."

He was not the type of man who fails when he undertakes something.

My visit to England was short. I returned to our flat in Montreux to stay till the beginning of spring, when we went back to Wittersham.

While we lived at Territet in our flat, and later on when we took a house not far from Vevey after my lease of Wittersham House had come to an end, two of our most intimate friends were Monsieur and

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Madame Drucker, who were living at the Montreux Palace Hotel, and are still living there as I write this.

Monsieur Drucker is Dutch. Madame Drucker is English and was a Miss Fraser. After their marriage for a long while they lived in London and had a beautiful house in Grosvenor Street, where they entertained lavishly. Monsieur Drucker, besides being a connoisseur of cooking and a first-rate authority on wines, drove four-in-hand, was a member of the Coaching Club, was an excellent shot and an ardent collector of pictures—especially of the Dutch School—china, porcelain and old furniture. Every year during the shooting season he rented a big shoot with a fine house attached to it, and entertained a succession of visitors. For three years he had Milton Abbey in Dorsetshire, and used to drive down there four-in-hand, taking four days on the journey and changing teams half-way.

Although during the last war for private reasons he gave up his house in London, and has ever since then lived in hotels, in each he keeps a cellar of marvellous wines, which I have been lucky enough to sample on several memorable occasions. I shall never forget one Christmas dinner he invited me to at the Montreux Palace Hotel. Besides delicious food we had four kinds of the most exquisite wines I have ever tasted, and ended with priceless old brandy. I am a very moderate drinker and am not blessed—or cursed?—with a strong head for wine, but Mr. Drucker made me not only taste, but drink, a glass or two of every wine he provided, and, to my astonishment, I did not disgrace myself. The reason must have been that all the wines were absolutely first-rate.

After the last war Mr. Drucker gave his whole collection of pictures, china and furniture to the Dutch Government and it was housed in the Ryks Museum at Amsterdam.

To Her Majesty the Queen of Holland he presented as a special addition to the collection two wonderful, and I believe unique, Chinese vases, for which he could, if he had chosen to sell them, have had about seventy thousand pounds.

He, as I write, now lives happily in a hotel, and in his sitting-room there not even one picture hangs on the wall. In London he entertained quantities of clever people, one of his best friends being Mr. E. V. Lucas. It is very interesting to hear him talk about how he gradually collected his treasures, about his visits to auctions and his experiences with the dealers. He is devoted to children, and walks about Montreux with his pockets full of sweets and chocolates for them. Mrs. Drucker, too, is the soul of kindness to those who are her friends.

In Switzerland John Knittel became a friend of Romain Rolland, the famous French author and publicist, and knew him and his sister well. They lived then near to the Hôtel Byron. Now Monsieur

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Rolland, after marrying again, a Russian lady, has gone to live in France. He came two or three times to us when we had given up our flat and taken a country house in Tour de Peilz, near Vevey. I met him then and talked with him, but I never knew him as John did.

He is an amazing worker. I have often wondered how he can possibly write all the remarkable books he publishes, for he has an enormous correspondence to deal with from people all over the world. He is deeply interested in the fate of Russia and is always following closely all that happens in India. He knows Gandhi, and has written an interesting Life of him, which I have read. When Gandhi visited Europe he came to Switzerland on purpose to see Monsieur Romain Rolland, and the three Knittel children were invited to meet the great man and were photographed with him. In the photograph, which hangs in Mrs. Knittel's sitting-room, Gandhi is holding a bouquet and rather resembles a very peculiar sort of bride.

Monsieur Rolland looks terribly delicate, but I suppose he must have a will of iron or he could not accomplish all he gets through. He is kind, and almost gentle, in social intercourse, but I have seen his eyes look like two blades. He became very much interested in John's work as a novelist, and admired greatly his book called *Thérèse Etienne*, about which he wrote him a letter that I should have treasured if it had been written to me, so full it was of generous praise and encouragement. In Switzerland his attitude during the last war set some people against him. But he has a noble nature and longs only to work for what he believes to be the good of humanity. A selfless and heart-whole man he is, whether one agrees with him or not.

I played a great deal of tennis in Territet and Montreux, on hard outside courts and also indoors on wood. And I also took up golf with a good deal of energy and had lessons from the professional, Roberts. My golf is bad. John, however, became expert at the game and won the Swiss championship three times. Mrs. Knittel also played and still plays. Her sitting-room is decorated with a large collection of trophies which the two have won between them. The major part of it belongs to John, but she has had her share of successes in foursomes.

Our second long stay in Wittersham House was marked by my only experience as part lessee of a London theatre.

John finished his drama, *The Torch*, for Moscovitch, and it was produced at the chief Brighton Theatre for a week's trial run. John and I stayed there for the rehearsals, and Mrs. Knittel, of course, joined us for the first night. There was a crowded audience, the play went well, and there were loud calls for the author. I was in the dress circle, and happening to look round saw John standing just behind me.

"They're calling for you!" I said. "Go away! Go behind and make your bow from the stage."

I almost drove him out of the dress circle, and presently he appeared

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behind the footlights and made his first but not last bow to an audience.

During the week's run of the play to good audiences there was a matinée, and I saw the great English actress, Mrs. Kendal, sitting with some friends in a stage box.

When the play was over I went to the box and asked her to tell me what she thought of the play. She said, "It shows a great deal of promise."

In order to introduce it to London, Moscovitch and I took a short lease of a theatre that happened to be empty, the Apollo Theatre, and after more rehearsals there was a first night in London. Again there was a crowded audience, much applause and calls for the author, and the play ran for a short time, at first to good, then to diminishing attendances. Finally, it was obvious that we could not hope to make a profit out of it, and we made fresh arrangements and got rid of the theatre. The loss was fortunately not great, and John was not much disheartened, as he is blessed with a buoyant temperament. His determination may be expressed by "Better next time." I continued to have complete faith in his gift for the stage. He has not yet produced another play in English, but he has written four plays in German, three of which have been produced on the Continent. One of these is an African play called *Protectorate*, which has met with success in Switzerland, especially in Berne and Zürich. The second, called *High Finance*, was first given in Berne. The third, *Via Mala*, a very clever adaptation of the novel *Via Mala*, has been acted all over Europe and is still running. It has had many hundreds of performances, in all the towns of German Switzerland, and in Munich, Hamburg, Vienna, Budapest, etc., etc. I saw it when it was produced in Zürich. The famous German author, Herr Thomas Mann, and his wife sat in the next box to ours. And a day or two later he wrote John a letter, expressing his admiration of the drama and congratulating him on its success. It was repeated many times in Zürich. But it has never been accepted for performance in either England or America. John's fourth play in German, *Socrates*, will probably not be produced till the war is over.

John continues to write his novels and short stories in English. And they are translated afterwards into German, French and many other languages.

I have been lucky enough to live to see him obtain both fame and fortune after a long and arduous struggle, made especially difficult by his determination to do the greater part of his work in my, not in his, native language. All his books in English are published in America as well as in England and the English colonies. His recent great success in France, with translations in French, has been especially remarkable. His books are now coming out in Italian.

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Among interesting people whom we came across in Montreux-Territet was that very clever and characteristic lady, Countess Russell, whose name as a writer is simply "Elizabeth," the author of *Elizabeth and Her German Garden* and many other books which have delighted readers all over the world. She was the brilliant cousin of another celebrity from overseas, Katherine Mansfield, who obtained fame with her short stories.

I never saw Katherine Mansfield, but I met Lady Russell in Surrey and again when I was in Switzerland, staying in the Hôtel Monney before getting into our flat.

Her health for a time was delicate and she was advised to live in the high air of the Swiss mountains. For years she had a big chalet and a smaller "writing chalet" on a mountain not far from Montana, where she often spent months alone working and reading. This chalet now belongs to a friend of mine, Hugh Whitaker.

One evening when I was in a train coming back from a golf match at Aigle, passing along the corridor I saw a little lady wrapped up in furs who I thought resembled Lady Russell.

When the train stopped at Montreux this little lady went by my compartment to get out. Again I thought, "She certainly resembles Lady Russell." But she was so very much wrapped up against the cold that I couldn't be at all sure it was she.

She got down from the train and went to the long staircase which led down to the street, and I followed. If it was Lady Russell I wanted very much to speak to her. But she had given no sign of recognizing me. I managed to pass her—and still wasn't sure. Then I allowed her to pass me. She walked quickly on. I followed. We reached the Hôtel Monney, where I was staying, and she went into it.

I believe I went to buy an evening paper. Anyhow, when I came into the hotel she had vanished. Probably it was a stranger. But I decided to ask, and I said to the hall porter,

"Is a Countess Russell staying here tonight?"

"Yes, sir," he answered. "She's just gone up in the lift."

Ah, I was right! It *was* the delightful "Elizabeth."

Immediately I sent up my card, and a message to say I was with friends staying in the hotel and hoped much to catch a glimpse of her and to have a word with her.

She sent down to tell me that she was going to have a cup of tea in the room opening into the hall. We could meet there.

We did meet, and I told her I had seen her in the train but hadn't been certain it was she.

She laughed and said, "It was rather dark. I didn't recognize you. To tell the truth, I was rather bucked. I thought you were an ardent stranger who was wanting to pick me up but couldn't summon up the courage to do it!"

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"Could you consent to dine with me and my friends?" I said.

"Why not? I'm only here for one night."

We arranged to dine together at eight, and I telephoned to Count and Countess Lützow to tell them that the fascinating "Elizabeth" of the German Garden was dining with me and couldn't I persuade them to join us? They accepted with real joy, as they knew all her books but had never met her. I ordered a first-rate dinner and we had a delightful evening, the other guests being Mr. and Mrs. Knittel. Later on John paid a visit to her at her chalet, accompanied by Count Lützow, who was enchanted with her.

She had grown-up daughters, but her face was as smooth as a baby's, and her mind was as sharp as a needle. She was very small and quite irresistible. But she knew how to lay out a fool. Here is a little story to prove that.

Shortly after the end of the last war "Elizabeth" was dining out with some friends and met there a certain woman who had obviously fallen in love with an officer, to whom I will give the name of Colonel Flaxman. This woman, fixing all her attention for some unknown reason upon "Elizabeth," began talking to her incessantly about the marvellous prowess in the war of the Colonel. She talked on and on about him till "Elizabeth" was bored almost to tears.

At last she said, "In order that you may fully understand how marvellous Colonel Flaxman was, let me tell you one thing about him."

"What thing?" murmured "Elizabeth" plaintively.

"Colonel Flaxman was wounded in *thirteen* different places and *still* carried on!"

"Elizabeth" raised her pretty eyebrows towards her beautifully arranged hair, and after an impressive pause ejaculated, "I didn't know a man *had* so many *places*!"

This deflated the *grande amoureuse*, and no more was heard that evening about Colonel Flaxman.

Once when I was in Surrey I was invited out to meet Lady Russell and had a long talk with her. Towards the end of it she said,

"You know such a lot about us poor women that I'm sure you know that in every woman's life, if she lives beyond her youth, there comes a great crisis."

"Really?" I said.

"Yes. Of course you know what that crisis is."

"I'm not at all sure that I do!" I said, quite at sea.

"Oh yes, you must!"

"Honestly I don't! What is it?"

"She has to come to a great decision."

"Indeed?"

"You know what that decision is."

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"I really don't. What is it?"

"She has to decide whether she will swell or shrink. *I* decided to shrink!"

Lady Russell was delicious company, but you had to be up to the mark with her, and her mark was a high one. No wonder that some people were afraid of her.

I had some fun with her about an anonymous book which came out. It was called *In the Mountains*. I read it, and though no name was attached to it I felt almost positive she had written it. And one day when I was with her I asked her if she had heard of it.

She said vaguely, "Yes, I've just heard of it. Is it worth reading?"

I said it was, and that I was almost sure she would like it, and offered to lend it to her.

"It might almost have been written by you," I said.

"You are flattering me," she said.

Afterwards we had a short correspondence about it and I found out that my guess was correct.

She was married twice, the first time to Count von Arnim, whom she is supposed to have drawn as "the man of wrath." Her second husband, Earl Russell, she was accused of pillorying in her book called *Vera*.

When he was quite young, Hugh Walpole was tutor to her children. In later life he and she were excellent friends, and he came to stay with me in Switzerland on his way to visit her at her chalet. He told me that she had not been particularly pleasant to him when he was only a tutor. Katherine Mansfield evidently adored her. In one of her letters she writes about Lady Russell and calls her "Our lovely little neighbour." She has died during the horrible war which is raging as I write. She had left her European home in the South of France, and breathed her last in America.

While we were still in our flat in Montreux-Territet we had the pleasure of a visit from Mrs. W. K. Clifford, the authoress of *Aunt Anne, Mrs. Keith's Crime, The Likeness of the Night*, and other successes, who was staying for a time in Switzerland with her unmarried daughter; and we also saw a good deal of Charles Kingsley's daughter, Mrs. St. Leger Harrison, who wrote many books, using "Lucas Malet" as a pen-name.

Mrs. Clifford, widow of the brilliant professor who died young in the plenitude of his powers, was clever, warm-hearted, expansive (if she liked you) and ready to be thoroughly amiable if you were not on her black list. For a long time I was on her black list. I never knew why. But she greatly disliked, or at any rate disapproved of me—possibly because of *The Green Carnation*. Eventually, however, we became excellent and even rather intimate friends, and in London on a Sunday I often went after dinner to spend the rest of the evening

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with her and her daughter in their house close to Paddington Station. Mrs. Clifford knew practically all the literary lights of London and was appreciated by all of them. She knew also the stars of the theatrical world and wrote for the stage. The Kendals acted in her play *The Likeness of the Night* and had much success with it. Yet I don't think Mrs. Clifford was ever quite satisfied with the results which her work brought her. But perhaps few authors ever are quite satisfied. Her married daughter I met a few times before she became Lady Dilke. She was gifted as a poetess, and was much appreciated by critics, but for a great many years I have seen nothing new from her pen. Perhaps she has ceased to write.

Mrs. St. Leger Harrison, or "Lucas Malet," whom I had known in London, came out with her cousin, Gabrielle Vallings, opera-singer and novelist, to live at the Hôtel Byron near the Château de Chillon, and we knew them well and saw them often. "Lucas," as her intimates called her, won much success with her novel *The Wages of Sin*, and eventually followed it with a very long, elaborate, and extraordinary book called *The History of Sir Richard Calmady*, upon which she told me she worked for nearly ten years before she was satisfied with it. I believe it was widely read, but she was very much vexed at the way it was reviewed by *The Times*, and complained to me bitterly about the injustice of the critique, which she attributed to the influence of another celebrated woman, whose novels had a tremendous vogue for a great many years. This woman was Mrs. Humphry Ward, whose husband was on the staff of *The Times*.

Lucas Malet was a very dignified lady, with white hair and a face which I thought resembled strongly the portraits of her father, Charles Kingsley. She was very agreeable and friendly with people she liked, but was now and then strangely indifferent to strangers. She considered me a real friend, but when my sister, Millicent, came to Switzerland, and was introduced to her by me, she took practically no notice at all of her, although we went on an excursion with her and two or three others on the lake. One odd trait which we all noticed in her was her apparent active dislike of children. Towards the end of her life I was sorry to hear that she got into serious financial difficulties. While she was at the Hôtel Byron she and her cousin became great friends of Romain Rolland and his sister. Miss Vallings had a powerful soprano voice and had sung the great part of Isolde in London. Later on she gave up her musical career for the career of a writer. Eventually she and "Lucas" left Switzerland after a protracted stay there, and "Lucas" died not long after in England.

"Lucas" told me that she wrote with great deliberation and slowness, and could never do more than a few hundred words in the twenty-four hours. Another writer, a great favourite with the British and American publics, whom I knew in Cannes, Mr. W. J. Locke, author

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of *The Beloved Vagabond* and many other very accomplished and entertaining stories, lunching alone with me one day at the Carlton Hotel, said to me that he never wrote a sentence in daylight, but sat down to work after ten o'clock at night and worked until perhaps three in the morning. I asked him how much of a book he got through in that time.

"Never more than nine hundred words," he answered. "I'm a slow worker and take a terrible amount of pains."

"Do you write on coffee, like Balzac?" I asked him.

"No," he replied.

He looked at me with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"Don't tell Pussyfoot!" he added. "I work on brandy."

He may have been pulling my leg. I don't know. "Pussyfoot" was the name given generally to the ardent gentleman who introduced prohibition into America. I made his acquaintance when travelling, but he never tried to make me a teetotaller. Americans have assured me that the result of his well-meant efforts was that swarms of Americans who had never tasted alcohol till he started his campaign became heavy drinkers merely out of defiance.

XXII

EVENTUALLY, with a great deal of regret, we gave up Wittersham House. It had been a delightful home but we could not keep it longer as Mrs. Lyttelton wanted to resume possession of it.

Since then Fate seems to have decided against our settling down in another English home. For a good many years now we have lived mainly abroad: in Switzerland, in Tunisia, in Morocco, in Egypt, with visits to the French Riviera and other regions. And at last we have what seems likely to be, perhaps, a permanent home not very far from the city of Zürich which I have written about more than once, and in which I keep a little apartment as a *pied-à-terre*.

Before leaving Wittersham we decided to get rid of our flat in Territet. John had always disliked it because of the noise of the trains and the "towny" view from the windows, and I asked Frances and him to take the motor-car and look about for a house in the neighbourhood that might suit us.

They began their search, and in a few days told me that they had seen a country house in Tour de Peilz, not far from Vevey, which they would like me to see. It was quite in the country. At present it was

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furnished. They liked the situation. The house was isolated on a low hill commanding a fine view of the lake and mountains. Near it was a farm from which we could be supplied with farm produce. We should hear no noise of traffic. As to furniture, we should not need much of that as we had bought a lot of furniture for our flat and could easily do much to improve the interior of the house. There was a garden but not a very large one. It could easily be kept in order by one gardener. I ought to have a look at this little property.

I agreed and went with them to see it, but in a rather critical frame of mind, though by this time I was longing to get away from the flat.

The house which was called La Poneyre, and which, because it boasted one small turret, was occasionally alluded to by ignorant people as Château la Poneyre, although it was merely a villa, stood, as the Knittels had told me, alone on the top of a hill, and was reached by a narrow and rather badly kept country road. I realized at once that the situation was charming but that the outlook from the front windows was spoilt by two trees in the garden which grew close to them and shut out the view from the ground floor. The rooms were not at all bad, and I felt that we could make them look attractive by putting our furniture into them, changing curtains and carpets and repapering some of the walls.

"But," I said, "those two trees in front of the windows must come down, and we must have a clear outlook to the lake and the Dent du Midi, or I can never consent to live in the house!"

The Knittels agreed with me and we spoke to the owners.

I'm afraid they were shocked at my cruel decision. They had seen the trees all their lives and refused point-blank to cut down the largest of them. We therefore gave up the idea of renting the place and John decided to look for a suitable house in Biarritz. But before he had found one a terrific storm interfered on our behalf. It destroyed over two hundred trees in the neighbourhood of La Poneyre, including the trees I objected to. The owners then wrote to tell us of the disaster and to inquire whether we would now take La Poneyre. We looked upon the storm as *Maktoub* and took it. The trees having disappeared, we should now have a great and really beautiful view, over undulating green country, dotted with distant houses, to the lake, Villeneuve, and the glorious Dent du Midi. We could also see, of course, the range of mountains on the other side of the lake. It was a really inspiring view and enchanted us after living in the confinement of Territet, with a railway line close to us and blocks of houses and a station to right and left and in front of us. But we felt that we should have to do a great deal to the house if we were to turn it into a home we should really like.

John and Frances, however, were ready to see to that.

They were both inventive and delighted in arranging an interior,

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and in the end made La Poneyre very pleasant, though it always had drawbacks—one being that it had no back-stairs.

On the ground floor there were a quite good dining-room, and a drawing-room opening by french windows on to a terrace and the garden; there were also two other smaller sitting-rooms, one of which we repapered and used in the winter for a dining-room when we were alone. Beyond the hall there were a sitting-room for John and for a time the kitchen. Eventually, however, we radically altered the house downstairs, and installed a new kitchen and a servants' hall on a basement floor entirely separated from our quarters.

I had a sitting-room upstairs and a large bedroom with a glorious view. The Knittels had a bedroom which I thought delightful facing the same way. There was also a small sitting-room in the turret, and there were rooms for the children and servants—also a good garage for the car, which satisfied Louis, our French-Swiss chauffeur.

The garden was not very large and we had neither croquet nor tennis. But we had a little way off a kitchen and fruit garden, which contained also a quantity of roses. Eventually, when I felt that we were likely to stay in La Poneyre for a long time, I gave John *carte blanche* to refurnish my bedroom entirely while I went away on a trip. When I came back Frances and he took me into it, and it was completely transformed into a really delicious room, containing a bed which I often sleep in still, and which is one of the most perfect beds I have ever lain down in. We bought a couple more beds to match it, and a Blüthner grand piano which was chosen for us by a wonderful young German pianist called Helmuth Münch.

We spent a good many years in La Poneyre and I look back upon them as in the main pleasant years. In the house we had perfect silence for work. There was no sound of the warning train signal, no noise of trains going over the points. We greatly improved the garden, and often made little changes in the house, always for the better. The three children were growing up and becoming gay and charming companions. And our nearest neighbours, Madame Wagnière and her daughter, Marguerite Horton, were souls of hospitality and kindness and had a delicious house to welcome one to.

Madame Wagnière was an American from Boston, and had married a well-known Swiss banker whose bank had been in Florence, where she and her daughter had lived for a great many years. She was old, but did not seem old, for she had marvellous vitality and zest for life. When we came to know her she was a widow, and so was her daughter Marguerite, who inherited her mother's love of life and vitality and was a perfect hostess to the many who came to that charming house, and who still come to it though, alas, dear Madame

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Wagnière, after attaining a great age, has died. I became devoted to her, and my affection has been carried on to her daughter, who still lives and reigns in Le Petit Sully.

Marguerite Horton has a marked talent for music. She studied the piano in Rome with the famous Italian musician, Signor Sgambati, and from time to time has composed many songs, some pieces for the piano, and also two or three compositions for strings. One of these was played at an afternoon party her mother gave one summer, when many people, among them Monsieur Paderewski and his sister, the Ernest Schellings, and the greatest music critic of America, Mr. Philip Hale, and his wife, were in the audience.

While we lived in La Poneyre, Madame Wagnière and Marguerite were usually at home to their friends in the garden on Sunday afternoons in summer. We and any friends staying with us could always count on a warm welcome on these occasions, and I met many interesting people there from time to time, including the Ernest Schellings, musicians, writers, social lights, and enthusiastic card-players. For Marguerite Horton is a devoted adherent of the bridge table. But no bridge was played at those Sunday afternoons. Nor was music given at them. On weekdays, however, when only a few people were present, I occasionally listened to wonderful music in the room opening into the dining-room of Le Petit Sully.

It was there that one day after lunch I heard again Léon Delafosse. I say "again" because, long before this, when I was still a writer on the staff of the London *World*, Delafosse, then a very young man, came over to London with Monsieur Fauré, the French composer, and drew all London Society to hear him, and had a splendid portrait painted of him by Mr. John Sargent. He had been a wonder child who had astonished Paris by his talent, and when he grew into a young man the poet, Robert de Montesquiou, got up a great evening fête in his honour, at which Sarah Bernhardt recited and the whole of artistic and aristocratic Paris was present.

Since then I had heard nothing of him and had sometimes wondered why, and what had become of him. It was a delightful surprise to meet him unexpectedly at Le Petit Sully, gay, young-looking, full of clever talk and high spirits. I learned from him that he had withdrawn almost entirely from public performances in order to devote most of his time to composition. After luncheon he offered to play to us, and by the time I had heard only a very few bars I realized that his extraordinary power over the piano had lost none of its brilliance and polish. Although, as he told me, he never played at concerts any more, he practised every day as if he had to be ready for a concert on the morrow.

After this meeting I heard many of his compositions for the piano.

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I thought them both remarkable and beautiful, as well as brilliant. They were all published, yet I had never before heard them played in public. I spoke of this to him and said,

"Why aren't they played?"

He shrugged his shoulders and said, "I'm a pianist, so other pianists don't want to play me—perhaps!"

He came once to tea at our house when John and I were alone there. I didn't open the grand piano in our drawing-room or hint at his playing, though John had never heard him.

Soon after tea he said tentatively, "Would you care at all to hear something?"

I got up at once, opened the piano and put up the top.

"Your études!" I said.

He played to us gloriously for about two hours. When he had gone John said, "I feel nearly drunk with enjoyment of it!"

So did I. Monsieur Delafosse is still a very great pianist.

One day I had a surprise in our house.

A lady we knew came to visit us about tea-time and brought with her the most remarkable old man I have ever met. He was tremendously tall, very thin and agile, with an aristocratic face and brilliant dark eyes burning with intelligence and vitality. She introduced him to us as Monsieur Volkoff.

In London I had known a Monsieur Volkoff, who was an attaché at the Russian Embassy, and whose father, I had heard, lived in Venice, and I asked our visitor if he was any relation of this acquaintance of mine.

"I am," he said. "In fact, I'm his father."

We sat down to have tea and he talked brilliantly. I found that he seemed to have known everyone in the course of his long life. He had been an intimate of Liszt, of Richard Wagner, of Anton Rubinstein, knew well Richard Strauss, Duse, D'Annunzio. He still lived in a palace in Venice, but had evidently travelled widely.

Presently he spoke of Egypt and the Nile. This led me to ask him a question.

Long ago, when as a young man I had first visited Egypt, everyone was talking, or even raving, about the beautiful watercolour paintings of a Russian called Roussoff, paintings chiefly of scenes on the Nile. I had seen several of them. They were bought up directly they were exhibited, and two or three people I had known in Louxor had met the painter. But since that time he seemed to have disappeared. No more of his pictures came into the market, and when now and then I had asked about him none of those asked knew what had become of him.

I inquired of Monsieur Volkoff if he had ever heard of this Roussoff.

"Oh yes!" he said. "I have heard of him."

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"You seem to have known almost everyone. Did you by chance ever meet him?"

"Well—meet him! I knew him to a certain extent."

"Do tell me what has become of him, and what he was like."

"He was rather like me, in a young way. I am Roussoff!"

And it really was he.

After that surprising and delightful interview Monsieur Volkoff sent me an autobiography he had written, beautifully illustrated by himself. He was the most fascinating old man I have ever encountered.

From time to time interesting people paying visits to Switzerland dropped in upon us. Among them I remember Philip Hale, the doyen of American writers on music, the critic who always wrote exactly what he thought of singers, pianists, composers, the critic of whom many public performers were afraid, though he was only cruel, if indeed he ever was cruel, in telling the truth as he saw it. He came with his interesting wife, to whom I still write, and from whom I have letters. Henry Bernstein, the French dramatist, came; Princess Paley with her daughter Princess Theodore of Russia came; Hugh Walpole the novelist came.

And, once, but by mistake, the ex-Khedive of Egypt, Abbas Hilmy, came.

That was a funny sort of visit to have from a Royal personage, but only John had the benefit of it. It came to pass in this way.

One summer evening I went to dine with a friend in the open air on the big terrace of the Montreux Palace Hotel. Little dining-tables were set out in a row near a railing covered with flowers. Above was a long string of lights. My friend and I found that our table was placed between the tables of two ex-monarchs, neither of whom we knew. The ex-monarch on our right was Amanullah, formerly King of Afghanistan; the ex-monarch on our left was Abbas Hilmy, formerly Khedive of Egypt.

They dined: we dined. Of course no word was spoken between them and us.

I had often seen the ex-Khedive when he was a quite young man, for I had been on the Nile when he paid his first visit to Upper Egypt, and had been present at all the festivities in his honour at Louxor and Assouan. He was now greatly changed and had become entirely bald. Ex-King Amanullah I had seen many times, for he was living at that time quite near to us.

After an agreeable evening I went home and told John who had been my neighbours at dinner.

I must now explain that in the Château de la Tour de Peilz not far from us dwelt Sir Horace and Lady Pinching. Sir Horace had for years lived in Egypt and had an important post there. He and Lady Pinching still had a house in Cairo.

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On the afternoon that followed the dinner I have mentioned I was up in my sitting-room, which looked out on the drive, writing, when I heard a motor-car drive up. Besides myself and the servants, only John was in the house, and he was downstairs.

Almost directly I had heard the noise of the car I heard the sound of voices outside, the voice of John and another voice in lively conversation. Then followed a burst of laughter.

Wondering who the visitor was, I got up and looked out of the window. To my astonishment, I saw below me the ex-Khedive, Abbas Hilmy, standing by a motor-car and talking to John.

What on earth could have brought him to visit *us*? We had not the honour of knowing him, and even if we had, what could induce him to drive out into the country uninvited to see us?

I withdrew from the window, and while I was marvelling at this happening I heard voices apparently saying goodbye, and then the noise of the car driving off.

A moment later John came laughing into my room.

"Who d'you think has been here?" he said.

"I know. It was Abbas Hilmy! Why on earth did he come?"

"He had been invited to tea with the Pinchings, inquired how to get to them and was directed to us. Pinching and Hichens! The names got mixed up and I've had a Royal visitor!"

After that John occasionally addressed me as "Hinching."

Hugh Walpole's visit to me had not been expected. Once when we were together I said to him that if he were ever in Switzerland I hoped I should come across him. He remembered this and wrote from London to tell me that he was coming to Switzerland to pay a visit to Countess Russell, and could spend two or three days with the Knittels and me if it would be convenient to us. Of course I begged him to come.

He arrived and stayed, I think, for about ten days.

Hugh Walpole was one of the most genial of men. Almost directly he arrived in our house he began calling us all by our Christian names and begged us to call him "Hugh." He and I had many long talks together, chiefly about literature and the writer's life. Even then—this was long ago—he was delicate, as unfortunately he had diabetes, and although full of life he got easily tired physically. While he was with us his father, the Bishop of Edinburgh, with a sister of his, happened to be staying near by at Les Avants, and one afternoon I took Hugh in our motor to have tea with them. When he came back and we were up in my writing-room he sank down on a sofa and exclaimed,

"Oh, I'm so tired! This excursion has tired me out!"

Yet we had only been for a very short motor trip.

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I felt anxious about him and, to tell the truth, did not expect him to live and work on untiringly for so many years. Considering his state of health, his energy was simply amazing and his facility in writing was almost abnormal. He loved writing. It was a passion with him. And I think that was partly why he had such great success. While reading his books one was not conscious of labour, but felt always the joy of the writer in creating them.

I was rather sorry that he gave up so much of his time to reviewing the books of others, and I think a good deal of his enthusiastic praise was exaggerated. There are not quite so many geniuses about as he would have had us believe. But his love of, and enthusiasm for, literature were absolutely genuine.

He had almost a mania for being liked and for drawing to himself the friendship of others. He kept a list of his "friends," and once told me there were over ninety names in it. I was obliged to confess that my list, had I made one, would have been shorter than his.

While he stayed with us I took him to several of those we knew along the lake, and without exception they were delighted with him. He professed great interest in my friend John's work, but after he left us I think that interest rather quickly evaporated. We possess several of his books with written dedications from him.

I heard the news of his sudden death on the radio and it gave me a shock. His father, the Bishop of Edinburgh, was a very genuine, kind, unaffected and attractive man, whom I thoroughly liked. After Hugh had left, the Bishop came down from Les Avants and spent an afternoon with us. I think he was proud of his son's great and lasting success. After his departure from Switzerland he sent me a signed book by him to add to my collection of autographed volumes.

Hugh Walpole's life was too short, but in spite of his not excellent health I think he enjoyed it immensely. He not only worked heartily but went to theatres, concerts, committee meetings, dinners and lawn-tennis tournaments heartily. He was the chief pillar of the Book Club. I was asked to belong to it, but replied that, though perhaps in the opinion of the committee too senile to be capable of judging what books were most suitable for my private reading, I still preferred to trust to my own choice of literature, and therefore did not propose to subscribe to the new venture.

I am sure that the death of Sir Hugh Walpole was genuinely mourned by a great number of people who had been his colleagues and friends.

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XXIII

DURING our long stay in Switzerland, first in Montreux-Territet, later at La Poneyre in Tour de Peilz, before we decided to have a home somewhere in which we could settle down in a warm climate for about eight months of the year, we made several trips in and out of Europe, sometimes taking the children with us, now and then leaving them behind us to continue their education in Switzerland while we were away. When the latter decision was come to they were left in the care of friends and La Poneyre was shut up. When finally we made up our minds to have a house of our own in Egypt we kept them permanently with us. But before we were sufficiently enchanted by Egypt to transfer all our furniture and belongings to Cairo, and eventually gave up La Poneyre, we introduced them to Egypt as it were by degrees, keeping on La Poneyre and renting a bungalow more than once during the winter and spring in the garden of the Hôtel de Louxor at Louxor on the bank of the Nile.

One year we went *en famille*, taking a Swiss governess for the children, to Sidi-Bou-Saïd, a white village on a height overlooking what we called "The Gates of Africa," which was within an easy motor drive along the bitter lakes to Tunis la Blanche.

I had visited Tunis several times before this and was familiar with it, and I had some good friends near there in Baron and Baroness Rodolph d'Erlanger, who had been living in Sidi-Bou-Saïd for many years, in a lovely Oriental palace built and decorated by the Baron after he had been sent to Tunisia as a young man because of his delicate health. He belonged to the South American banking family of Erlanger established in London and Paris, but was not an active partner in the firm. One of his brothers was not only a banker but an accomplished musician, who composed and had produced more than one opera. Baron Rodolph was an equally accomplished painter, and often exhibited at the Salon in Paris. His wife, a delightfully genial and happy-making woman, full of human kindness and sociability, was an Italian, a countess in her own right and a Roman.

When it occurred to me that a winter in Tunisia might be very pleasant I mentioned it to her and she told me that she and her husband always spent their winters at Sidi-Bou-Saïd and had done so for years. Besides their lovely home they possessed other houses there which they sometimes let. Perhaps I might like to rent one of these furnished. If so, she undertook to arrange it delightfully for us, and to see that we had everything that would make us feel at home and comfortable in it.

This offer seemed to me too good to refuse. I told the Knittels of it, and we decided to rent an Oriental house of the Erlangers, not actually in the village, but below it on a hillside overlooking the plain

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of Carthage, with a garden on the left of the road that mounts up to Sidi-Bou-Said.

The children were delighted and full of excitement at this new prospect. A date was arranged, and we sailed from Marseilles for Tunis full of joyous anticipation.

Before this a change had come about in my working life.

Through my agents in London, Messrs. Watt and Son, my work had been introduced to the editor of one of the Hearst magazines in America which was "run" in connection with another Hearst magazine in London. The American magazine was called the *Cosmopolitan*, and the magazine in London *Nash's Magazine*. The latter was ably edited and directed by Miss Alice Head, a very clever woman whom I knew well and liked very much. She seemed to manage nearly all Mr. Hearst's business in England, and sometimes went to America to stay on his huge ranch there, or travelled with his party when he came over to Europe each summer. She was financially acute and had also a strong feeling for art. At present she is editing a magazine which she has recently started—*Nash's Magazine*, after a brilliant career, having ceased to exist owing to the terribly unsettled conditions of everything in tormented Europe.

The editor of the *Cosmopolitan* paid a visit to London, and said to Mr. Alick Watt, who had succeeded his able father, then dead, as head of the firm of my agents, that he would like some good material from England for the American literary market.

One morning I happened to pay a call upon Alick Watt and he said to me, "Have you anything in your head for a powerful novel?"

I said that I had two or three ideas, and added, "Why do you ask?"

He then told me of the Hearst editor's visit to him and continued, "He's just round the corner now at the Hearst office. Why don't you call on him and tell him of those ideas? He will soon be wanting a serial and might possibly take a fancy to one of them, if you can put it to him cleverly."

I said, "What's his address? I'll go to it at once."

He gave me the address and I went to the office.

In it I found two American men, both total strangers to me, who looked me over scrutinizingly and said—I had sent up my name,

"Well, Mr. Hichens, very glad to meet you. We know your work in America. What do you want just now?"

I told them what Mr. Watt had told me, and Mr. Ray Long, who was the *Cosmopolitan* editor, the other man being Mr. Hearst's permanent American representative in London, said, "Could you outline to us the novel you have in your mind, if you have one?"

I immediately complied, and told them the skeleton of a book I intended to write, dwelling mainly on the most dramatic scenes in the plot I had thought of.

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They listened with great attention, and when I had finished, Mr. Ray Long said to the other man, "That seems good to me!"

"Yeh!" agreed the other, moving his head in acquiescence.

"We'll have a talk about it immediately with Mr. Watt," said the editor. "Thank you for coming. I hope we'll do business."

I went away full of hope.

The result of this interview was that a few hours later Mr. Ray Long visited Mr. Watt, offered a large sum of money for the novel I had sketched to him, and asked Mr. Watt to draw up a contract straight away.

This was the beginning of my long connection with the *Cosmopolitan*. But it led to a curious scene with this same editor which took place later on in a Paris hotel.

I had written the novel for the *Cosmopolitan*, and it had been published in that magazine in serial form, and also in England as a serial. In both countries it was fortunately very successful, and in consequence I sold another novel for serial form, but not to the *Cosmopolitan*, as I had no reason to suppose the editor would care to follow a serial novel by me with another from the same pen.

Mr. Ray Long heard of this when he paid another visit to my agent in London, and was extremely angry. He declared to Mr. Watt that of course he ought to have had the offer of the second novel, as he had published the first one. I happened to be in Paris and Mr. Watt wrote to tell me of this, and begged me to go and see Mr. Ray Long, who was just starting for Paris; and to "soothe his injured feelings" if I could. In consequence of this I wrote to Mr. Long at his hotel and offered to call on him. In reply he telephoned asking me to breakfast on the following day. His voice in the telephone sounded very sulky.

My invitation to "breakfast" was for ten o'clock. I arrived punctually in quite a hungry condition, and was shown upstairs into an empty sitting-room, where there was a table spread for breakfast with three "covers." There I waited for several minutes. Then a side door into a bedroom opened, and my editor, looking very pale, very puffy about the eyes, and very cross, came in wearing pyjamas and followed by Mr. Frazier Hunt, one of the Hearst staff. After "good-mornings" had been duly uttered, and Mr. Hunt had telephoned for breakfast, my editor, walking about the room in his pyjamas, began to complain bitterly of Mr. Watt's and my conduct in selling my last novel to a rival firm, after "all we have done for you in America."

"When I heard what you had done I could hardly believe it," he said. "I have never been let down like this till now."

He continued in the same strain, not giving me time to interrupt him without absolute rudeness, his voice getting more and more distressed, till really I almost thought tears were coming.

A diversion at length occurred on the arrival of coffee, rolls, eggs,

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fish, etc., and we went to sit down at the breakfast-table. Then I explained that neither Mr. Watt nor I had had any suspicion that the *Cosmopolitan* would want another novel as a serial from me so soon, or of course we should have offered it to him before signing a contract with anyone else.

This earnest statement seemed to mollify him a little, and, breakfast obviously helping, he looked at me more kindly and said, "What's to be done now?"

"How d'you mean?" I said.

"How are we going to keep up your connection with the *Cosmopolitan*? I don't want to break it. Couldn't you write us a lot of short stories?"

Of course, in past days I had written many short stories, but for a considerable time I had given up writing them, and I felt doubtful of my powers in that branch of literature.

"I don't know," I said doubtfully. "It's a long time since—"

"Try! Try!" he adjured me. "We'll put them in *Nash's Magazine* in England and in *Cosmopolitan* in America—if they suit us. And you must give us your next novel but one—if we like it."

The result of this interview was that I wrote a short story called "The Sleeping Car," which satisfied Mr. Ray Long, and he signed a contract with me, binding me to write nine short stories a year, six of which he engaged himself to publish in the *Cosmopolitan* magazine and all the nine in *Nash's Magazine*.

For a good many years after this I made a large income out of writing short stories, and of course continued to bring out new novels. I usually allotted one week to each story. They ran to from six to seven thousand words each, and I thoroughly enjoyed writing them.

My visit with the Knittels to Sidi-Bou-Saïd has brought back this episode to my memory, for while we were there I devoted a great part of my working hours to writing short stories. Almost every week I produced one, and Mrs. Knittel, who is an admirable typist, insisted on typing them for me.

The house we lived in had been delightfully arranged for us by Baroness d'Erlanger. There was an Arab courtyard round which the dwelling-rooms were built. We had a blue-and-white dining-room, a salon with enormous divans, two or three small sitting-rooms, in one of which I wrote while John wrote in another, and several bedrooms. The house had an upper storey with grilles over the windows. My bedroom was long and narrow.

The only drawback to the house that I can remember was that voices in it seemed to acquire a peculiar resonance, especially when they came from the courtyard. This annoyed me now and then when I was working on my short stories. But we all became fond of the house and felt quite at home in it.

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The only drawback to the weather was the prevalence of wind.

We had no horses to ride at Sidi-Bou-Saïd, but directly we got there I joined the Tunis lawn-tennis club, and had a great many matches there on hard courts, often playing in doubles with the American Consul as my partner. I also played some singles against our friend Professor Unger, the painter, who came from Dresden to join us. He was a well-known and remarkable artist, and we have in our house four portraits he painted, two of John, one of Frances Knittel and another of me.

My début on the tennis-courts of the Tunis tennis club, which took place in the company of the American Consul-General, was the cause of a rather absurd incident. Some of my luggage not having arrived, I had no white tennis trousers—in those days "shorts" were unknown in the sporting circles of Tunis—and appeared at the club and played for two hours attired in a pair of grey flannel trousers and a "pull-over." Nothing untoward occurred on that day, and I left for my home in Sidi-Bou-Saïd well satisfied with my game. But on the following afternoon I received from the secretary of the club an official protest against my grey flannel trousers, stating that several regular members of the club who had seen me playing in them had "lodged" a complaint against me on account of them, and requesting, or indeed practically commanding, me not to play again at the club except in the orthodox "whites." I showed this protest to the American Consul and we had a hearty laugh over it. When I again visited the club my missing luggage had reached me, and I showed up dressed from head to foot in virginal white.

A Spanish friend came to Tunisia because we were there, a particular ally of John's, but a friend, too, of all of us.

This was Marquis d'Alcedo, one of the most markedly individual beings I have ever met.

I encountered him first at Louxor, and introduced him to John on board ship when we were returning to Europe. Although it would have been almost impossible to come across two people more utterly different in every way from each other than they were, to my great surprise they quickly became intimate, seemed to understand each other perfectly, and finally cemented a friendship which endured till the death of the Spaniard in Egypt at the age, I believe, of seventy-nine.

John was a thoroughly democratic Swiss. Marquis d'Alcedo, who eventually became Duc de Santo Mango, was a Spanish grandee with a tremendous sense of his social standing and aristocratic importance. He was also old, and had a vast knowledge of, and respect for, a world which John, though he knew something of it, had no specially high opinion of.

Yet it was amazing how they got on together from the very first moment of meeting.

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Marquis d'Alcedo had a big house at Biarritz and a spacious apartment at Cannes. John stayed with him more than once in both of them, Mrs. Knittel joining him in the visit to Biarritz, where they met all the colony of expatriated Russians and were nearly drowned in Grand Dukes.

I was also kindly invited both to Biarritz and to the Cannes apartment, but my almost inveterate dislike of staying in other people's houses prevented me from accepting the invitations. I managed to preserve my complete liberty without mortally offending Marquis d'Alcedo, who did, however, more than once gently chide me for being so reluctant to accept his hospitality. Nevertheless we were always thoroughly good friends, and many times I lunched and dined alone with him.

Marquis d'Alcedo, when we knew him, was a widower, and both his daughters were married. He was perpetually in what is called "Society," but I believe he often felt lonely, and I think he found a certain homeliness in our family life which appealed to a generally hidden simplicity in him. At any rate, he sought our society and came to Tunis because we were at Sidi-Bou-Saïd. He stayed at the Tunisia Palace Hotel, kept by a Swiss. I had stayed there, too, many times, for Tunis during years has been very familiar to me.

Every Sunday afternoon Baron and Baroness d'Erlanger were at home to their friends, and there we met everyone who counted in Tunis and its environs, and also many travellers who were making a stay there.

Baron Cederström, once married to La Patti, came there, bringing his second wife whom I had met in Louxor and met again later on when we lived in our house on the desert edge not far from Cairo, and his sister-in-law, Lady Guernsey.

My Roman friend, the Duchessa di Sermoneta, came to pay a visit to the Erlangers, and stayed for some time, and with her and Baroness d'Erlanger I made a motor tour to Kairouan, Hammamet, and other places of interest in Tunisia. But during most of our stay in Sidi-Bou-Saïd we led a decidedly quiet life, and John and I got through a great deal of work.

Sometimes I took a longish walk, or rather a fairly long stroll, alone with Baron d'Erlanger. I liked this, as he was a very unusual and exceedingly gifted man, held back from perhaps making a really big name in art by his exceedingly delicate health. Mentally he was intensely alive. He painted a great deal and often exhibited. He was deeply interested in music, and while we lived near him was working on a book about Arab music. He trained some of his servants as singers, and several times asked me to sit in the lovely central hall of his house and listen to them singing and playing native instruments behind the delicate screen which concealed them in a balcony at the end of the patio.

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One evening I specially remember.

Monsieur Cortot, the great pianist, came to Tunis and gave an afternoon concert to which I went. I knew his wife, whom I had visited at her apartment in Paris when I was there for the winter, and I had, of course, often heard him play and had talked to him once after a recital he had given in Vevey. But I did not go behind to congratulate him after his concert in Tunis, as I was with friends and felt sure he would be surrounded.

When I got home towards evening I received a message from Baron d'Erlanger asking me to come to his house after dinner, to meet Monsieur Cortot and hear, with him, some Arab music. I went and spent a delightful evening in the beautiful patio with the Baron and the great pianist. There were no other guests. We had coffee and talked, and now and then, from the faintly lit balcony above us, soft singing and the sound of plucked instruments dropped down to us as we rested on the divans with our feet on the beautiful Persian carpets. The tiny fountain played, lit up from below, and the water from it glided down the alabaster rill. Monsieur Cortot seemed greatly interested in the Baron's efforts to bring knowledge of the strange Arab music into musical circles in Europe. Many, probably most Europeans, think Arab music ugly and entirely unintelligible. But it can be fascinating, touching and full of deep feeling. I learned to know this in Sidi-Bou-Saïd.

Our Christmas there was marked by an event that delighted the children. I took them into town to pay their first visit to a cinema. The film was Barrie's *Peter Pan* and they were enchanted with it.

In the spring we had a quite unexpected visit from an Interviewer. He was an important person from the *Daily Mail*, who was taking a holiday in North Africa with his wife and family. He heard by chance we were living at Sidi-Bou-Saïd in an Oriental house and decided to have a look at us—and our house. We liked him and his family and became friendly with them. We even played tennis with them at the club. Afterwards he wrote an article on his visit to us which came out in the *Daily Mail*.

The weather became much better when spring arrived and the time to go home drew near. The wind, which had bothered us a good deal in the winter, died down. Quantities of flowers appeared on the many terraces of the Erlangers' garden. The plain of Carthage was dressed in green, and the sea at the "Gates of Africa" and the waters of the Bitter Lakes took on hues of almost magical beauty. I had finished writing all my short stories. Switzerland was waiting for us. So we packed up and took our leave of the delicious white village with which we had become so familiar.

We have never had another home there. But I have been there again as a traveller, and was there with a friend in the heat of August just

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before the outbreak of the war that is raging now. We visited it two or three times, going over by train from Tunis. The house the Knittels and I had lived in was shut up and deserted. My friend, Baron Rodolph, was dead. But Baroness d'Erlanger still passes much of her time there, or did during the first months of the war, though she was not there in that August. My friend and I left Tunis in a hurry, warned that war might break out at any moment, and when our ship crossed the Mediterranean we were escorted all the way by a warship.

And the day was to be when there was fighting in Tunis, and Bizerta, where we often went to see Mr. Terence Bourke and his daughters, was to be besieged.

All that was to come, a great tragedy of the future. But in happy ignorance we steamed away from our first African home unescorted, reached Marseilles safely and motored to La Poneyre.

XXIV

BESIDES visiting Louxor with the children we paid a second visit with them to the St. George's in Algiers and afterwards to Biskra, and one spring we all went for several weeks to the French Riviera, being enticed thither by an article I read in the *Daily Mail* about a place I had never before heard of called Beau Vallon. The description given of this beauty spot, of its peace, its delicious climate and its admirable hotel, made me long to go there. And I learned there was also the great attraction of a golf-course, and the hotel had the alluring name of The Golf Hotel. The journalist who wrote the article stated that he had not had time actually to visit this golf-course, but he had heard that it was very attractive and well laid out.

"Shall we go there?" I said to the Knittels.

"Yes. It sounds the very place for us and the children," they replied.

Sea, a beautiful hotel, cork forests, golf, a divine climate and perfect peace and quiet—what more could we wish for? I wrote to the hotel and engaged rooms for a period of six weeks. We would go and take two servants with us to look after the children.

After a rather wearisome journey we arrived, bringing a motor-car. The hotel looked very nice. It was large, was evidently new and stood alone among trees. The golf-course was not visible from it.

We went up to our rooms. Not at all bad. I descended for tea, as it was latish in the afternoon. A rather shabby-looking waiter took

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my order, and after a long time returned with tea, a tiny square of something wrapped up in paper, and some biscuits.

"What's this?" I said, picking up the minute square of something.

"Your sugar, sir."

I unwrapped the paper and beheld a minute bit of sugar.

"Please get me some more sugar. This is not nearly enough."

The young man went away and returned with the following message, in French.

"The proprietor says that is your allowance of sugar for tea at the fixed price and you can't have any more."

My comment on this ultimatum was, "Please tell the proprietor that I have engaged rooms here for six weeks for a large party, but that if you don't immediately bring me the sugar I have just ordered we shall all leave the hotel tomorrow morning, and only pay for one night here."

This threat produced some more sugar.

I then inquired for the golf-course.

"There is no golf-course, sir," I was told.

"But this is the Golf Hotel!"

"Yes, sir," pointing towards the sea, "Voilà le Golfe!"

"Do you mean to tell me there is no golf-course at Beau Vallon?"

"No, sir, there has never been a golf-course. The hotel is called that for a name."

There was no golf-course within a great many miles.

As for the hotel, the running of it was chaotic. There was only one miserable little housemaid to do the rooms of two floors. The service was simply abominable. There was one wretched undersized tennis-court with no run back. The proprietor was a novice who knew evidently nothing about hotel management. The article I read had entirely misinformed me. We stayed for a short time and then moved to Cannes.

There I saw some wonderful tennis, with Mademoiselle Lenglen, Miss Ryan, with whom I made friends, Mrs. Satterthwaite and Mrs. Lambert Chambers, already friends, Cochet, Hillyard, "Mr. G." (the King of Sweden), and many other popular players. I also met the famous old player, Mrs. O'Neill, and had many singles against her, and I saw for the first time the lovely young Spanish player, Señorita d'Alvarez, who was just beginning her brilliant career. Afterwards I got to know her, when we stayed in the same Country Club House for the Wimbledon Tournament.

Soon after we arrived in Cannes I received one evening a telephone message from Mr. W. J. Locke. He kindly invited me to a lunch-party to meet some of his many friends, among them the noted critic, author and playwright, St. John Ervine, one of the pillars of the *Observer* newspaper.

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I accepted, but before the lunch the Lockes invited me also to a quiet tea so that we might get to know each other.

When I arrived at their beautiful villa I was led by a servant through a room fitted up as a very seductive bar to a drawing-room, where I was welcomed by my host and hostess and, to my surprise, by my old friend, Reginald Turner, who was staying with the Lockes as a guest. Mr. Locke said, "You've come to tea?"

"Yes," I said, "as you kindly asked me."

"Surely you'd rather have something from the bar instead? We've got all sorts of drinks."

Reggie Turner, who wore squeaking boots, walked into the bar and came, squeaking, back.

"Every sort of drink!" he announced. "Prodigious!"

But I stuck to tea, though I felt slightly afraid that my doing so would perhaps lower me in the estimation of my hospitable host.

Two or three days later I went to the large lunch-party and met, among many others, Mr. and Mrs. St. John Ervine for the first time.

For years I had read Mr. Ervine's remarkable articles in the *Observer* and had admired them. I felt that in them he was always absolutely honest as well as very clever and knowledgeable, but their occasional severity had made me feel also that he was decidedly formidable, and I wondered whether I should be able to get on with him. Brilliant men are sometimes difficult in ordinary life. I remembered the awful afternoon I had spent with Joseph Conrad.

Fortunately I was not snuffed out, like an unfortunate candle, by the Ervines. Both of them were cordial, interesting and willing to be interested. I got on with them both, and saw more of them while I was in Cannes, but not as much as I should have liked to see.

St. John Ervine, besides his admirable plays, has, of course, written books, two or three of which I have in my library. One noble book, which I consider his finest work, is *God's Soldier*. It is a long and elaborate work about General Booth and the Salvation Army, and I wish everyone would read it. Many educated people are still inclined to sneer or laugh at the doings of the Salvation Army, and I myself used, in my ignorance, to think that General Booth was probably a very clever and artful climber, who used religion as a ladder by which to mount into notoriety. St. John Ervine's book made me understand what a great fellow the General was, and showed me what thousands of poor and almost desperate people have been helped or even rescued by the Army the General created. *God's Soldier* is a profoundly moving and deeply interesting book, and shows the nobility not only of General Booth but also of the man who wrote it.

At Cannes I made acquaintance, too, with another very well known author whom I had never come across before. This was Mr. J. D. Beresford, who wrote *The House in Demetrius Road* and many other

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clever novels, and who has written a great deal for the *Manchester Guardian*. I went to tea with Mrs. Beresford and him in their flat. And much later on he came to lunch with us in our house not far from Vevey. He is one of our most incorruptible authors, and never "writes down" to his readers to catch cheap popularity.

Mr. Locke came to lunch alone with me at the Carlton Hotel and we had a long talk about "shop," which I think we both enjoyed. He was, of course, one of the most successful authors of the time, and St. John Ervine considered him "great" as a story-teller, and wrote it in a well-known London paper. Locke is very easy to read, but he asserted to me that he found writing books a most difficult job, and that he could only write very slowly and carefully. In fact, he said that he laboured painfully over his books, and always at night when the house was absolutely quiet. Fortunately he concealed his labour. Reading him one might suppose that his books came easily, as I believe Hugh Walpole's books really did. For Hugh had amazing facility.

Locke died rather suddenly, and I never had the chance to see him again after my visit to Cannes. I have a very pleasant recollection of him and his kind geniality.

While on a subsequent visit to Cannes in the height of summer, with John Knittel but without the family, I made the acquaintance of another writer, not English, who has since become known to English and American readers. This was Madame Odette Keun, who I believe is Dutch and the daughter of a Dutch diplomat. Before meeting her we had exchanged several letters, and she kindly sent me one of her books, which I found very clever and interesting.

When I was in Cannes in the summer she was living alone at Juan les Pins, then not the ultra-smart and popular place it has become since. I spent a couple of hours in her vivid company, and found her one of the most live wires I have ever encountered. Her intelligence approaches brilliance and can cut like the sharpest of knives. She has written a book about the English that is well worth reading though not always complimentary. Since then she has also written about America, where I believe she lives now. For a long time she had a house near Grasse.

Later on I had some difficulty with her over a book she published in England which I read in manuscript before it was issued. I objected strongly to a short passage in it and wanted her to cut it out. This apparently made her think I was a literary coward, and she wrote to tell me so in very plain language. I stuck to my guns, however, and thought perhaps I had made an enemy. Eventually we met again at Louxor, where she stayed *en route* to the Soudan, and had a pleasant talk. But I don't think she ever quite forgave me. Mr. J. D. Beresford

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knew her, and told me he found her one of the most "refreshing" people he had ever encountered.

Madame Odette Keun certainly says what she thinks, and what she thinks is often startling. She also, I am sure, writes what she thinks, and what she thinks is worth reading.

The Knittels and I twice went for the winter to Morocco, leaving the children in Switzerland. We took our motor-car with us and travelled mostly by car in order to see the country at our leisure. And what a wonderful country it is, vast in its spaces, sometimes very grand in its scenery, and endowed by the French with marvellous roads!

On both our visits we made our headquarters the beautiful Hôtel Mamounia at Marrakesh within the red encircling walls. But we visited Casablanca, Rabat, Tangiers, Fez, Mogador; and the Knittels, without me, saw the grand sea-coast at, and near, Agadir.

Though we enjoyed very much both these long visits to Morocco, the first one was complicated for me by an unpleasant change in my fortunes.

During a great many years I had been financially very fortunate. I had gained by my work a great deal of money. Much of it I had spent in having what is often called "a good time." But I had not been either reckless or careless, and had saved and invested enough to bring me in a large income yearly apart from what I made by my writing, which continued to be successful. Some time before we went to Morocco I made what turned out to be an unlucky investment in connection with a cinema business and lost between six and seven thousand pounds in it. This was disappointing, but the tide of my good fortune had turned; much worse was to come.

Under advice which seemed to me excellent I launched out in a big speculation, my first and probably my last. It went wrong. I need not go into details which would only be boring. There was a great financial crash in which a world-famous financier was involved. Thousands of people lost their money. The man who was responsible shot himself at the critical moment, leaving ruin behind him, and, in spite of great efforts to save the situation, which only made matters worse, I lost a fortune, all of which had been gained by hard work.

This was the worst blow that had ever befallen me, and I arrived in Morocco feeling decidedly the worse for wear. But directly we were in the Mamounia, and I had settled into my quiet bedroom with a window opening on to a secluded balcony, in front of which lay a big garden full of flowers and birds, with a far-off view of the snow-topped range of the Atlas Mountains, I set to work to repair the damage so far as it could be repaired. It was probably too late now

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to build up another solid fortune, but I was not entirely cast down. I still had fairly good health, some ideas and a pen.

I could not afford, as usual, the luxury of a sitting-room to write in, but my bedroom was absolutely quiet. And in it I sat down to a spell of very hard work which resulted eventually in a book called *The Paradine Case*. This was financially not the most successful, but one of the most successful, of the many books I have written, and eventually I sold the cinema rights of it for a large sum of money to the Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer Corporation of America. It has not appeared in film form yet, but I recently heard that it is being filmed, and that my favourite film star, Miss Greta Garbo, will probably appear in it.

Although I worked specially hard that winter and spring in Morocco, I rode on horseback for exercise, and also played golf on the private golf-course of the Pasha of Marrakesh, who lived in an immense palace hidden behind walls in the city, but whose golf-course was in the plain beyond the red walls with towers of the town. After the Sultan I suppose he is by far the greatest native magnate of Morocco. We met him, but I only exchanged a few polite words with him. He has often visited Europe, and sometimes came to dine with acquaintances at the Mamounia.

When we settled down in the hotel we saw a little house peeping over a wall which seemed to belong to the garden. It had a tall gate of wood which gave on to a garden path. I wondered about it and asked who lived there.

"The Englishman," I was told.

"What Englishman?"

"Le Capitaine Fitzroy," was the reply. "He always lives in Morocco."

The name of Fitzroy was, of course, known to me. "Does he come to feed in the hotel?" I asked, feeling rather curious about an Englishman who lived "always" in Morocco.

I was informed that he used to come to the hotel often to dine, but for a long time had given that up. He had a cook and ate alone in his little house.

It seemed that he was perhaps a recluse, but soon we got to know him and found in him a very pleasant and cordial neighbour. He had been for years in the Guards and was a fine horseman. He had a horse and rode almost every day. And I had many rides with him in the great public gardens with reservoirs that are one of the glories of Marrakesh, and in the plain that lies between them and the range of the Atlas.

Captain Fitzroy told me that he came to live in Morocco by chance. He had lived much in London, but his health broke down and he decided to seek the climate of Egypt. I don't know what ship he

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took, but I do know that it touched at Tangier. He said by that time he was sick of the voyage. He decided to land. He decided to give up Egypt. And ever since then he has lived in Morocco, first in Tangier and then in Marrakesh. Even in the heat of summer he does not leave the country but only moves to the sea. His chief recreation is riding. He reads innumerable books, many of them novels. Now and then he sees friends who come out for the winter. He has a small enclosed garden which he looks after himself. He supervises the doings of his Moorish servants. And he seems quite contented. We saw a good deal of him during both of our visits to Marrakesh. He belongs to the Grafton family of Fitzroys. I have had many a long talk with him and several very good dinners in his house cooked by his Moorish boy-cook.

I don't know what has become of him during this war, but I hope he has been left undisturbed in his little house with the cupola.

During our two long stays in the Mamounia Hotel we met a great many people, most, though not all of them, new to us. Among them were Madame Delysia, the very popular singing actress, who has had such great success in England and America though by birth she is French; Lord and Lady Sackville; Mrs. Moncrieff, the sister of the late Lady (Ian) Hamilton, wife of the General; Sir Thomas Best, who for a time was deputy Governor of Malta and has held important posts in the English Colonies; Sir Preston Colvin, formerly in India, who spent much of his time in painting; the Duke and Duchess of Nemours, and others. The Knittels already knew Madame Delysia, who had, with them, stayed for a while in Laghouat, the beautiful oasis in the south of Algeria, but though I had often seen and heard her on the London stage I met her in private for the first time. She brought a young and attractive French husband with her, to whom she seemed devotedly attached.

Madame Delysia proved to be capital company. She was, I should think, a thorough Bohemian, careless of opinion and the conventionalities, full of *bonhomie*, totally devoid of self-consciousness, "out" to have a good time and wishing to share it with anyone who was at hand. She seemed to me neither vain nor conceited and quite unspoilt by success. We saw a good deal of her and made two or three expeditions in the company of her and her husband, who was a sportsman and boxer rather than an artist and an intellectual.

Lord Sackville had succeeded his brother, whom I had known in London and whose highly original wife had been my great friend. He is well known as an important general, and was at one time Governor of Guernsey before he came into Knole and a Peerage. He had a very important post at the Peace Conference in Paris after the last war. In Morocco he played golf with John. His wife, the new Lady Sackville, is a very charming American with a quite extraordinary

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resemblance to my dear friend and collaborator the late Mary Anderson de Navarro.

Mrs. Moncrieff I already knew before she was with us all in Marrakesh, and I knew also her sister, Lady (Ian) Hamilton, who lived with her husband in London in a big house in Hyde Park Gardens, called by their friends "the Palace in the Park." Both these sisters had great distinction, which set them apart from nearly all other women, a white distinction extraordinarily attractive. Mrs. Moncrieff must have been a girl of singular beauty. In old age she is still so beautiful that when she comes into a room all eyes turn towards her. In the crowd that filled the Mamounia Hotel she stood out, and new arrivals, when she entered the dining-room or great hall, instinctively asked, "Who is that?" I thought it a privilege to be a friend of hers and delighted in her company. With her devoted companion, Miss Wigham, she has travelled over the world, and has a specially deep knowledge of India. Unless there is war, every winter she wanders, sometimes very far afield, sometimes in Europe or Northern Africa. She is fond of the beautiful Bute Hotel in Tangier, where I have met her more than once. In England she lives in Rutland Gate, and she goes often to Scotland. Her brother is Sir Alexander Blair, who married the brilliant Bulgarian, Mademoiselle Stancioff, and has his home at Blair Drummond. We met them in Egypt.

The Duke and Duchess of Nemours we had known before. We met them again unexpectedly in the Mamounia, where they came from Rabat for a short visit. I had been with them in Montreux, and the Knittels stayed with them once on the property of the Duke's mother, the Duchess of Vendôme, in Morocco, which at that time the Duke had the management of. The Duchess is a lively and attractive American, full of gaiety and extremely modern. The Duke has been a great airman, is a sportsman, a good golfer, and a thorough-going *homme du monde* with a vast experience of life both in Europe and America. When they came to Marrakesh they were living in a bungalow on the outskirts of Rabat, with as their major-domo a youngish man who had served for years in the Foreign Legion. They were kind enough to invite me to stay with them in the bungalow when I left Marrakesh *en route* for home, and I accepted the invitation and went there with John for a few days, had a delightful time, and visited in their company Meknes, a city in Morocco that was new to me.

Afterwards, in horribly changed circumstances, I was with them in Paris when France was already in war against Germany for the third time during my life. Their very attractive bungalow was decorated throughout in shades of green. And for company in it they had some beautiful dachshunds.

Rabat attracted me very much. I even felt that I should not mind having a winter home there. The sea air was glorious and reminded

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me of my rooted English love for the sea, which I shall never get rid of in spite of my affection for a country that has no seaboard. In Rabat there is something silky-soft in the air from the sea which caresses the skin in spite of its vivid freshness. And the whole atmosphere of the gay white quarters of enticing, though modern, houses, roofed with tiles of emerald-green and standing in gardens, is so cheerful that I felt as if depression could have no place there. While I was with them the Nemours meditated building themselves a house on the cliff facing the ocean. This plan was never carried out, and now they live mostly in Paris. But when I was with them in Paris they had acquired land in a lovely situation above Tangier, and, when the war was over, hoped to build an ideal house which they had already planned there.

What a building up there will be when the destruction now raging is over!

One day when we were at lunch in the Mamounia our attention was attracted by a slow procession of three newcomers entering the great room and moving deliberately towards us. First in order came a lady with an Eton crop of dark hair, smoking a cigarette in a very long holder. She was closely followed by a fairer companion, not smoking, and the rear was brought up by a youngish man in flannels. They passed us with impressive self-possession and arranged themselves at a table close to us by the window.

I could not help being interested in them and wondered who they were.

In the evening I became even more interested, for when the band, which played to us after dinner, gave forth the luscious strains of a Tango, these two ladies began with granitic aplomb to dance it together, sometimes holding hands or touching shoulders and waists, at other times separating and executing steps by themselves, then once more uniting in wonderful South American movements.

What struck me most about all this was the astounding self-possession and indifference to scrutiny the two dancers showed.

A couple of days later the fairer of the two ladies introduced herself to me, and said she would like to make me known to her cousin, whose name she said was "Michael Pim." I was willing, and thus I came to know a very clever and interesting woman.

Mrs. Pim was, I think, half American. Her cousin was wholly American. And both had their home in America.

I saw a good deal of them, not only in Marrakesh, but also later on in Fez and Tangier, where we stayed in the same hotel.

Mrs. Pim struck me as remarkable. She seemed to have something of the man in her intellect and to be a quietly daring creature. We talked about writing and writers, and I found that she was an author. Having in America become deeply interested in Mrs. Besant and the

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Indian question generally, she calmly packed up her trunks, set out alone for India, and remained there alone for more than two years, travelling all over the Empire and probing into everything that aroused her interest or curiosity. She then returned to America and wrote a big book, published by Putnam, which she called *The Power of India*. I became so much interested in her conversation and accounts of her travels that I purchased her book and found it very candid, well written and remarkably acute. She was certainly not pro-English, and in places criticized my countrymen rather severely, but I did not find her book so partisan as Katherine Mayo's. "Michael Pim" has a level head and calm courage. She and her cousin went back to America. Now and then I have had communications from them, but not for a good while now. Perhaps I shall hear from them after the war has come to an end. I hope so.

Fez is much the most interesting city in Morocco. The quarter in which the French live has fortunately been built outside the walls of the native city, which has not been spoilt, as Cairo has been, by the encroachments of an alien civilization having little or nothing in common with it. In Fez one can still walk in a maze which makes one feel as if one were transported back, on a magic carpet, through the centuries, and were tasting the marvels, smelling the scents, brushing through the crowds, hearing the voices, and hovering near the secrets of the Arabian Nights. I have wandered for many hours alone in Fez, among its caravanserais, bath houses, mosques, carefully hidden gardens and blind palaces, and have recovered there the sensations of transformation, of wonder, of mystery and of being far far away, which I was conscious of long ago when I wandered alone for days in Damascus.

Long may Fez remain what it was when I was there, what I hope it still is. Even now sometimes when I sit alone I seem to hear through the silence the sound of its hidden and rushing waters. Wonderful Fez!

XXV

BEFORE we came to the conclusion that our time in La Poneyre had lasted long enough, that it would be interesting to seek a new home and let the education of the children develop in a new environment, we had increased our acquaintance in Switzerland by several people who, like ourselves, had found in the little country of lakes and mountains an asylum of peace and beauty that they had gradually

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learnt to be fond of, and in some cases to love. Among these I was fortunate enough to number two Poles, who were less antagonistic to me than Joseph Conrad had been. They were a brother and sister, and the brother was world-famous.

Our kind and hospitable neighbours of Le Petit Sully, Madame Wagnière and Mrs. Horton, often invited me to dinner and tea, and often, I believe because they knew I liked it so much, when they were alone and we could talk with perfect intimacy.

One day, however, when we were together and no one was with us, a car drove up, and in a moment an elderly lady came in and was greeted by my two hostesses with special, almost exuberant warmth. She was thin, rather pale, and it was obvious from what she wore that fashions meant nothing to her, and that no self-consciousness troubled her. She had no beauty, and yet instantly I felt drawn towards her, scarcely knowing why. There was something, I thought, extraordinarily human and sympathetic about her. I was conscious that I was in the presence of one who had a rare character.

Madame Wagnière introduced me to her—Madame Wilkonska.

This name meant nothing special to me. I had never heard of it before, or, if I had, it had been forgotten. We began to talk and, strangely, almost directly I felt intimate with this newcomer into my life. Probably realizing that I knew nothing about her, Madame Wagnière presently said,

"We have often talked about Madame Wilkonska's famous brother, whom I know you admire as much as we do—Monsieur Paderewski. She lives with him always at Morges and keeps house for him. And when he is touring the world she looks after everything in his beautiful property."

John had already made acquaintance with Monsieur Paderewski and had been to his house, and had met him once at dinner at Le Petit Sully, when I had not been able to go; but I had only seen him on the concert platform, and at one or two parties in London, when I had not been introduced to him, though I had talked with his wife, to whom I had been presented at a reception in the house of Sir Carl and Lady Meyer. I told Madame Wilkonska this, and she spoke with earnest regret of Madame Paderewski's death and of her brother's intense devotion to his wife.

It is difficult to give my readers any idea of how lovable Madame Wilkonska was and how she loved her brother. She was one of those women who seem to be entirely wrapped up in the service of others, and who never think of themselves or of what is due to them. After that first meeting I felt I knew her well. She was so transparently good and kind, and in the best way human. She asked me to come to Morges whenever I liked, and mentioned that she was always at home on Sundays, and that her brother, when he was in Switzerland, was

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at home too on that day to their friends. Of course I promised to go, and very soon I went, driving over with my friends of Le Petit Sully.

That was my first introduction to the big house near Morges, which was a place of pilgrimage to so many people from all parts of the world. Always there were visitors staying in it, and many of them were Poles and, I believe, very poor. For Monsieur Paderewski was the soul of generosity. Never have I met anyone else who loved so to give as he did. He was always giving; he was always succouring others. There was no end to it and, in spite of her loving heart, dear Madame Wilkonska could not help being troubled by it.

Many times she spoke to me of her difficulties, not in a complaining way, not criticizing her brother for his goodness, but showing fears not for their, but for his, future. She feared for his health. She feared that he would work much too hard to make the money which he seemed to give away with both hands. His gains, of course, were enormous, but often he gave concerts that brought in huge sums the whole of which were handed over to charity. In this way he gave away thousands of pounds. And at Morges he kept open house and took pupils for nothing.

I know this, for a young American pianist whom I met was taught by Monsieur Paderewski regularly for months without paying a farthing, and in addition was continually invited to meals at the house.

On the Sunday of my first visit to Riond Bosson, as the house was called, Monsieur Paderewski was at home there, and I had tea in his company at one long table round which we all assembled, and an interesting talk with him afterwards in a room where stood two grand pianos covered with signed photographs of Royalties and celebrities.

He was still a wonderful-looking man, with a face of arresting power which seemed to me somehow panther-like, though neither dangerous nor evil. On the contrary, it had great nobility. Yet there was something strangely of the panther in its contours.

We talked in English, though now and then he said a few words in French, as if he were accustomed to speaking often in that language. All that he said interested me, but once he surprised me and I felt far from agreement with him. In speaking of literature—he was an omnivorous reader—Tolstoy was mentioned. My admiration of Tolstoy as a writer is unlimited. I think him by far the greatest of all the Russian writers I know anything of. *War and Peace* is the greatest novel I have ever read, and *Anna Karenina* is almost equally great in my estimation. But I found that Monsieur Paderewski apparently did not care for Tolstoy. He even spoke of him, I thought, with distaste; not, of course, denying him talent, but as if Tolstoy made very little appeal to him either as artist or man. Realizing this, I changed the subject as soon as possible.

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He spoke with enthusiasm of America and also of his English friends, mentioning specially Lady Barrington, who was also a good friend of mine.

"Once you have an English friend," he said, "you have a friend for ever!"

This tribute pleased me very much. He told me what gigantic audiences he had played to in New York and showed me a photograph of the crowd at his last recital in, I think, Carnegie Hall. (This recital, I learned later from Madame Wilkonska, was given for charity.)

The two grand pianos remained closed and the signed photographs, among which I saw one of Queen Margherita of Italy, held sway over them.

After that first visit I was several times in Riond Bosson, welcomed by the great amiable Newfoundland dog which guarded the door on a very long chain that I'm sure gave him no sense of captivity. On two of these occasions only was Monsieur Paderewski visible, though on two other occasions he was in the house.

There was always a festival there on the owner's name-day, and one summer I received an invitation to this. Most of us arrived bearing gifts. I gave the day's hero a big illustrated copy of my book called *The Near East* with a signed dedication. We assembled in the billiard-room and our presents were arranged on the covering of the billiard-table.

At first Monsieur Paderewski was not with us. He was in the house having a little private celebration in which the children of Morges took part. He—so like him!—was giving *them* presents. And he came in soon with all of them round him to receive our congratulations and greetings, dressed, as so often, in white.

A great many people were there, I should think nearly sixty in all though I did not count them, and presently we filed in to a banquet which was served at an immense table. I believe there were one or two other tables in other rooms for the overflow, but I only remember the one at which I sat between Mr. Philip Hale, the famed, feared, musical critic from Boston, and his wife, whom I already knew well and who had been to our house.

There was only one speech, and that was a very charming one delivered by Philip Hale, who was chosen to offer our felicitations to our host on his name-day. Monsieur Paderewski just thanked us with evident feeling but did not make any speech.

The banquet lasted a long time, for Monsieur Paderewski was something of a *bon vivant* and in his house the cooking was excellent and the wines matched it. I think he liked to sit on and talk over the dessert. He was a remarkable conversationalist, full of knowledge, widely read, witty and sometimes humorous. Once he spoke to me about the nervousness which plagues some even famous public per-

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formers, and said he had never been able entirely to rid himself of it. I asked him about his first appearance as a pianist in America, and he told me that on arriving there with a few programmes prepared he found that he was expected to play with orchestras a number of concertos which he had never studied. In order to master these quickly he practised sometimes for sixteen hours a day. All his life he was a tremendous worker.

The end of his very wonderful life was tragic, for he was a fervent patriot and suffered terribly when his country was attacked and almost exterminated with monstrous brutality amounting to deliberate torture. I was three times in his house, invited there by Madame Wilkonska, with whom I had struck up a really warm friendship, after the murder of Poland. Monsieur Paderewski was up in his rooms entirely secluded. He did not come to tea, at which there were several Poles living on his bounty.

His sister said to me, with tears in her eyes, "He can't meet anyone. He is almost broken down by what has happened."

And later, when I was alone with her, she gave me frightful details of what the Germans had done in Poland, even putting innocent schoolboys against a wall and deliberately shooting them down one by one.

"One just cannot understand such people," she said. "What are they? Men or beasts?"

Finally, as he could do nothing to help Poland, Monsieur Paderewski got away to America. Of course, Madame Wilkonska went with him. Morges was abandoned. They never returned. Both died not long after their arrival in New York—killed, I believe, by sorrow.

Another great pianist with whom I made friends while we lived at La Poneyre was Monsieur Brailowsky. I heard him first with orchestra at a concert in Vevey, where he played in two concertos, one an astoundingly difficult work founded by Liszt on the *Dies Irae*, the other a Chopin concerto. I was amazed by his power and brilliance and sought his acquaintance. He was touring just then in Switzerland, and I followed him to Lausanne and Geneva to hear his recitals. Monsieur and Madame Botkine accompanied me to the Lausanne recital and admired him as much as I did.

Since then I have often been with him and his exceedingly pretty Polish wife. They have a house and garden near Lausanne, standing empty now as they were travelling in America when the war broke out and have not been able to come back to Europe.

Brailowsky is a delightful man, entirely free from affectation and with a great deal of humour and kindness. One of his chief pleasures is to drive his powerful motor-car. He also plays lawn-tennis. For general society he does not care at all. In fact, he told me once that he disliked it. But he was very friendly in intimacy and very easy

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to get on with. Mastery of the piano apparently came very easily to him. He has wonderful hands and also an astonishing memory. I have heard him play every note Chopin composed without the smallest failure, and lots of other music.

When we were living in Egypt he came there to play in Cairo and Alexandria, and visited us in our house at the edge of the desert with his wife, who always travels with him and stays in the artists' room at all his concerts. They are as devoted a couple as were Monsieur and Madame Paderewski. Brailowsky has travelled and played all over the world. When he was coming to London to play for the first time at Queen's Hall his agent asked me to write a brochure about him and his playing to introduce him to the London public. I did this with pleasure and it was circulated in London among musical people before his first concert. He told me that although his public recitals are always crowded he was once engaged for a big fee to play to an audience of only two. This was in New York. An elderly millionaire asked him to play privately a full programme in his house and offered him a large sum for the evening. Brailowsky agreed to do this and expected to find waiting for him an audience of the millionaire's friends. But nobody was there but the millionaire's middle-aged wife. And he played for an hour and a half, or longer, to them.

"They loved music," he said. "But they didn't like crowds."

Another very great musician of an entirely different type whom I have had the pleasure of knowing well is Herr Wilhelm Furtwängler, the famous German conductor. I met him in Switzerland and played singles at tennis against him. But I will write about him when we get to the Egyptian phase of my life with the Knittels.

XXVI

WHEN finally we decided that, in spite of our affection for Switzerland and some of our friends there, we wanted something new in our lives to wake us thoroughly up, the question was where to go, not merely for a winter visit but for the major part of the year. Frances, John and I all had a yearning for Africa. At first we thought of perhaps going to live in Morocco, like our friend Captain Fitzroy. John had paid a visit there alone, had met some very interesting men there, and was greatly attracted by the wild vastness of the country, about which he had recently written a book called *Abd el Kader*. But we were

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also attracted to Egypt. Wouldn't it be rather wonderful to have an Egyptian home?

We debated the question in 1932 while we were again wintering in Morocco, which we left for Europe in March. John and I started alone by car from the Mamounia to pay a short visit to Rabat, leaving Frances to follow us in a few days.

While Frances was alone in the hotel an elderly woman, a visitor there, came up to her and said she had a great knowledge of the meaning of the lines in a hand, though she was not a professional hand-reader.

"May I look at your hand for a moment?" she said. Frances said she might.

She examined it closely and presently said, "You are in imminent danger of death."

This was said to Frances when she appeared to be in her usual health, played golf nearly every day and was living as she generally did.

She followed us to Rabat. I parted from the Knittels and went to Nice to stay with my Italian friend Marchese Uberto Strozzi in his flat there. Meanwhile, on reaching Europe, the Knittels motored home through Spain at express speed. They reached La Poneyre on March the 22nd. Frances went at once to our friend Doctor Niehans, a celebrated Swiss surgeon. He examined her and said she must be operated on immediately. On March the 23rd she was operated on. He told her afterwards that if the operation had not been performed, in a week's time probably she would have been dead. Fortunately her recovery was rapid, and on the 29th of the month John was able to leave for Egypt, in search of a house in that country.

On April the 19th we were excited by a telegraphic message from John asking us to give a six months' notice to the owner of La Poneyre. He had found in Egypt a house that might suit us. The children were told and we were filled with anticipation.

Directly John returned a council of war was held and questions of future finance were carefully gone into. John had seen a house in a garden at the edge of the desert not far from Heliopolis outside Cairo which he thought would do for us. It belonged to Aziz el Masri Bey, the commandant of the Cairo police school.

He described it and I said, "Let's take it! Though I've not seen it, if you like it so much I'm pretty sure we shall like it too."

In consequence eventually we took Dar Ain Shems. This was in the month of July 1932.

Towards the end of the year we had the whole of our possessions in Switzerland packed up for transfer to Egypt, handed them over to a forwarding agent, bade *au revoir* to Switzerland and set sail for Alexandria, eager for the new phase of our lives. The children especially were full of joy and enthusiasm.

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By this time we had bought enough furniture to furnish completely a fairly large house, and were taking El Masri Bey's house unfurnished.

As our steamer drew near to Egypt and presently we saw, still rather far off, the faint outlines of Alexandria, John seemed to become slightly nervous about what he had done, and said to me, "I do hope, Bob, you won't hate Ain Shems."

I tried to reassure him, but he still seemed to be slightly uneasy.

In Cairo we went to the enormous hotel at Heliopolis close to the aerodrome and the race-course, and on the following morning for the first time I saw the house that was to be our home for six years.

It was a bungalow, hidden in a garden containing mango and palm trees, a huge ficus tree, flower-beds, a large piece of rather rough but picturesque ground, stabling for three or four horses, a garage, a drive in between high hedges, which indeed almost formed a roof overhead, and enough rooms for us all. There was a separate, but semi-detached building for native servants. The house had a flat roof on which one could sit, looking over a view of the desert. We should be quite in the country and yet not at all far from Cairo. And the house and garden lay off the high-road which circled the edge of the desert. A fine golf-course of earth and sand was within ten minutes or so by car just beyond Heliopolis.

The name of the little property was Dar Ain Shems. Besides the main building, with the attached quarters for servants, and the grooms' rooms in the stables, there were, in the garden which led to the stables, two other buildings. One of these was a rather low, narrow and long detached room, which became John's writing-room. The other was a small sort of bachelor's house, containing a little hall with two rooms opening out of it to right and left. The room on the right of the hall door as you faced the house became my library and writing-room, the room on the left a bedroom not often in use. When in the course of time Herr Furtwängler came out to spend a few weeks in Egypt he slept in it.

The property belonged to the Circassian officer now Aziz el Masri Pasha. He had married an American with whom we soon became intimate.

We all took a great and immediate liking to John's acquisition, but we saw a good deal of work would be necessary before the interior of the main house would satisfy us. Both Mr. and Mrs. Knittel, luckily for me, delight in organizing and arranging things, and finally it was settled that as soon as our possessions arrived they would get everything into order, and that meanwhile I should go up the Nile and wait at Louxor and Assouan till the house was completely ready. Servants must be engaged, a chauffeur discovered, and, having seen the stables and the wide-spreading desert almost at our doors, of course

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we must have two or three horses. This was the country of horses. The race-course of Heliopolis was within a few minutes' motor drive of our new home. And nearer there was a sort of horse-market on the way to Cairo, where quantities of hobbled horses were to be seen at all hours of the day waiting for buyers.

I went up the Nile; our possessions arrived undamaged; Frances and John set to work, helped or hindered by the children, and before very long the new home was in order, servants were engaged, and I was told that I might come back and see all that had been done.

I came, and was surprised and delighted; the house looked far more attractive than I had expected.

On the right of the hall door I had a large and charming bedroom looking into the garden. But I was rather ashamed, for I saw at a glance that it was the best in the house by far. However, they made me take it. The other bedrooms, though nicely furnished, were more ordinary. For sitting-rooms we had a pleasant drawing-room beyond the long hall which, with a small sitting-room for Mrs. Knittel opening on to a terrace, occupied the whole width of the house. This hall had been delightfully arranged and looked like two charming drawing-rooms, one opening into the other. Next to the real drawing-room was a dining-room. It was big enough for us to give a dinner in it for fourteen or sixteen people, but there was nothing remarkable about it. There were rooms for the children, of course, and naturally there was a kitchen. That kitchen! It was a perpetual source of wonder to me that any cook could manage to prepare and serve up a first-class dinner in it. Yet while we lived in Egypt this was done a great many times. Native servants can accomplish marvels when they wish to.

The chief of the servants was a Berberine butler, Ibrahim, who from that day to this has never left our service, who has followed us from the scorching sun of his native country and of Egypt into the snows and the mountains of Switzerland, can now speak fluently Schwytzer Dütsch and has made many Swiss friends. He has seen the children grow up, Robert go off to seek his fortune in America, Doreen marry and become a mother, Margaret develop into a pianist who plays at concerts, John, whom he looks upon as his master, achieve fame as a novelist and a dramatist, Frances arrive at being able to talk to him in his own language, and he remains the devoted Ibrahim, apparently satisfied so long as he finds himself in the family which he came to know first in that bungalow at the edge of the desert.

Wages for servants are far lower in Egypt than in Switzerland, and in consequence we were able to have a good many. We had a gardener and two helpers in the garden, a chauffeur, a head groom and a helper in the stables, and altogether four men in the house. The Swiss maid whom we had brought with us did not stay very long. When she first arrived in Egypt she seemed horrified, and even afraid,

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to find herself surrounded by "men in petticoats." In a few days, however, she remarked to me one day that she thought men in petticoats were "très bien." It seemed on the whole a mistake to have only one woman servant in the midst of so many men; and our Swiss maid returned to her native country.

One of the first things we did on settling down at Ain Shems was to buy saddle-horses. During our long stay in Egypt we had a succession of horses, and John and I gladly took up regularly riding again. We were particularly well placed for riding, as we could get into the desert from our house in two or three minutes. During our previous visits to Egypt, when we had wintered in Louxor, of course we had ridden a great deal, I on a favourite horse called Scarab which I had hired from the Winter Palace Hotel. Now we were able to have horses not hired, which belonged to us. A pretty white Arab, which for a good while was my special steed, was called Cookie. When I rode it was usually early in the morning before breakfast. I would start at half-past six, accompanied by our groom Hassan on another horse, and be out in the desert at sunrise. Often I rode in the direction of the aerodrome at Almaza, and as I was returning home for breakfast would meet strings of race-horses coming out for exercise from the racing stables in our neighbourhood. John rode almost every day, occasionally with me, but often alone or with the groom, and generally in the afternoon. He had become an excellent horseman and passionately fond of horse-flesh. Robert also began to ride while we were in Egypt, and Doreen showed marked aptitude as a horsewoman. We all enjoyed being again in a "horsey" country.

Our house was close to the two houses in which Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, the poet, politician and breeder of Arab horses, and his wife, Lady Anne, had been living when I paid my first visit to Egypt. When I had seen them galloping in the desert near Abbaseeyah it had not occurred to me that perhaps some day I should live for six years in a house a few minutes away from theirs. Then I was a tourist in Egypt. In Ain Shems I was a resident.

Very soon after we had settled down the children began to attend school in Cairo. The girls went to the Lycée, and so did Robert till he was old enough to go as a boarder to Victoria College, the excellent English college for boys presided over by Mr. Reed, who was, and I believe still is, quite a power in Egypt. Meanwhile John and I, John in his long, narrow, isolated room, and I in the little bachelor's house, began once more to tackle our writing jobs. It was then that we thoroughly realized that our new home had one great disadvantage.

Beyond the high wall of the stables, which were situated at the end of that part of the garden which branched off from the right of the bungalow as you faced it, there ran a railway. Of course, John had noticed it when he took the place. When we first came to live in the

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house this railway had seemed to us both far enough away not to be troublesome to us. The line was not a main line, but connected Cairo with Marg and one or two other places beyond us. We had supposed that not many trains passed along it during the twenty-four hours and that we should not hear them, perhaps, very clearly.

We were wrong, as we soon discovered. The trains were very noisy, and one went by every quarter of an hour during the entire day. Not only that! Very often when passing our stables they whistled shrilly.

This was a sore trial to us both; to me especially, because the house in which I worked was not far from the stables, so that I heard the trains more clearly than anyone else except the men who lived in them.

In our Territet-Montreux flat we had been annoyed by Swiss trains, and now in our Egyptian home we were annoyed by Egyptian trains.

For a time both John and I thought that perhaps we should have to give up the house after our first year in it, but eventually we became so fond of it and of living in Egypt that we accepted the trains in a spirit of resignation.

One advantage connected with the railway line was that there was a station close to us, and the children could go to and come from school every day without being obliged to use the motor-car. I, too, very often went into Cairo and came back by train.

Gradually I succeeded in concentrating in my library so thoroughly that often, when writing, either I did not hear the trains or heard them without consciously noticing them, and, in spite of them, I wrote several books in Egypt and four plays. John also got through a lot of work, and wrote there one of his most popular books, *El Hakim*, called in English *Doctor Ibrahim*.

This was translated into Arabic and run as a serial in an Egyptian paper. Prince Mohamed Aly read it in English. It was supposed to be founded on papers left behind him by an Egyptian doctor when he died, but really John invented the whole narrative. Nevertheless the descriptions in it of Egypt, and of a doctor's life and experiences in Egypt, were so accurate, so realistic, that, after reading it, one afternoon, when I happened to be alone except for the servants, Prince Mohamed Aly drove over to pay us a visit, and said to me that no doubt Knittel's book was really drawn from an Egyptian doctor's papers to which he had had access. I told His Highness that John had created the whole thing without reading any private documents.

Before we came to live in Egypt we had made several friends there during our visits to Louxor, and we soon came to know a great many people in, or near, Cairo. The Knittels and I, of course, wished to make friends with the English colony, but we had no intention of limiting our acquaintance to that. We were in Egypt as residents, and we wanted to know better not only the country, but also Egyp-

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tians, the people of the country. We were fortunate enough eventually to know a great many of them, and learned to appreciate them and to value their friendship.

Perhaps our greatest Egyptian friend was a doctor called Doctor Boktor, a Copt, whom in the family we called "Doctor Willy." The children were entirely devoted to him, but they were not alone in their affection. Doctor Willy was the friend of us all. We saw him often, though he was not in practice in Cairo while we lived in Egypt, and he has stayed with us in Switzerland during two visits to Europe. We knew him well before we settled in Ain Shems, having met him in Louxor where for some years he was in charge of the Louxor hospital. Besides being our friend he was our doctor when we needed one, and I have never met a doctor in whose skill and knowledge I had greater faith.

Egypt has on the whole a delicious climate during eight months of the year; nevertheless, there is a good deal of illness there and many newcomers to the country suffer at first from various ailments. Louxor, in the south, suited me on the whole better than Ain Shems. Doctor Axel Munthe, the author of *The Story of San Michele*, whom I saw a good deal of in Louxor, told me that he considered the climate there the most "strengthening" one he had ever been in. He was there during more than one winter and took daily long walks, usually on the far side of the Nile. They were generally solitary walks. I remember one evening, when I was riding alone towards the Nile on my way home from Deir-el-Bahri, where I had been to visit the Harry Burtons, who lived near the Temple, seeing a tall thin man wrapped in a brown cloak striding along in the gathering darkness. It was Doctor Munthe. I joined him, keeping my horse at a walk, and we had a conversation together as we drew near to the mighty river. In those days he seemed fond of solitude, but in talk he was always interesting. I never met him in Cairo. Now and then I have caught glimpses of him in London, but I have never seen him to speak to except in Louxor.

I think we all took to our new home in Ain Shems as the average duck is supposed to take to water. It seemed to me the most natural thing in the world to have a house on the edge of the desert, to get up at six, and at six-thirty to ride out followed by our groom Hassan, and to greet the sunrise on the flat desert beyond the Almaza airfield. When the first rays of the sun fell upon us the winged machines rose, making their harsh music, towards the cloudless sky. Now and then, when they flew low over us, my white Arab, Cookie, showed signs of restlessness and fear, but he soon grew accustomed to them, and, beyond putting back his ears and making a caper or two, took little notice of them. As we presently turned from the empty desert towards home, and saw in the distance the long strings of race-horses coming away from their stables for the morning exercise, I looked

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towards the dark green of the fertile land, dotted here and there with newly built houses, towards the wall beyond which nestled our bungalow, and felt a thrill of gladness at spending the winter in such a delicious climate. And when we trotted in at our gate, and rode at a walking pace through the species of green tunnel which led to our many flower-beds, and perhaps smelt bacon frying in the kitchen as a presage of breakfast, I was thankful that I had refused Lord Burnham's offer to join the staff of the *Daily Telegraph*, and had released myself for ever from the ties of London.

Though I rode very often I did not ride every day. On some mornings I got up early, stepped into the motor, and was whirled off to the Heliopolis golf club, where I played eighteen holes against the black professional; afterwards I breakfasted at the club and read the *Egyptian Gazette* before coming home to work.

As time went on, and we knew more and more people, I often went to Cairo in the afternoon, and attended receptions, of which there were a great many between four-thirty and seven o'clock. If I didn't happen to go to Cairo, and no one paid us a visit, I always worked after tea until dinner-time in my library isolated from the main house. How well I remember the sound of the trains jangling by in the darkness!

Almost the first big afternoon reception Frances and I went to was given by Hilmy Issa Pasha, at that time Minister for Education in the Egyptian Government. It was in honour of an English writer and his wife, John Drinkwater the poet, essayist and playwright, and Mrs. Drinkwater, known to the public as Miss Daisy Kennedy, an accomplished violinist, formerly married to the Russian pianist, Moisevitch.

Drinkwater had been enticed out to Egypt to give a series of lectures and readings of his works at the Cairo University, and this reception was given in order to introduce him and his wife to his public. What Cairo called "everybody" was there. I gladly greeted Drinkwater, whom I had met at Birmingham after the performance of his play *Abraham Lincoln*, and was presented to his wife, who was wearing wonderful furs. Frances Knittel and I and two or three others were photographed by flashlight, standing with Hilmy Issa and the Drinkwaters in a group, and I met for the first time a good many people.

Among them were two whom I afterwards knew very well and liked very much, Sir Robert and Lady Greg, who lived in a beautiful house at the very edge of the Nile. Lady Greg I had met in London, but I think only once, before her marriage, at the house of the Eric Barringtons, who were devoted friends of hers.

Sir Robert Greg is a clever, interesting man, who has had a very successful career, and is, I suppose, one of the few men in diplomacy who has been offered an Embassy and refused it. He was British Minister in Siam and in Roumania before being appointed British

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representative on the Caisse de la dette publique in Egypt. But he had been familiar with Egypt for years before that happened, having served under Lord Kitchener when Kitchener was High Commissioner in Egypt. While we were in Ain Shems he was offered our Embassy in Chile, but preferred to stay on by the Nile. Lady Greg and he had built on to their delightful house, created lovely gardens in which it stood by the great river, and filled it with furniture, china and beautiful things of all sorts, including fine furniture and Eastern carpets. No wonder they did not wish to leave it for a Chilean Embassy. The second of their two gardens sloped down to the waters of the Nile. I soon dined with them, and we sat out there after dinner looking across the river to the lights of Cairo and breathing the soft silky air. Long before this I had written a book called *The Spell of Egypt*, and I felt it wrapping round me that evening.

(This book, by the way, in the Tauchnitz edition, has been pressed upon me by hawkers at the railway station of Cairo every time I have arrived in, or departed from, Egypt. "Buy, genleman, him very nice!")

At the Gregs that night I met for the first time Colonel and Mrs. Elgood, who lived in a house looking over the golf-course at Heliopolis, and whom I soon knew well. Colonel Elgood wrote several very interesting books on Egypt, and Mrs. Elgood had had a successful career as a doctor of medicine. Both of them knew Egypt *au fond* and were pillars of the English colony of Cairo.

John Drinkwater was a tremendous success. His lectures drew crowded audiences and he and his wife were fêted by the whole of society. Mrs. Drinkwater gave a violin recital in a large hall and was very much applauded. They visited us and came to a luncheon we gave.

I liked John Drinkwater. He struck me as not only a talented but as a very genuine and entirely sincere man. He had, as most people know, been an actor, and had even once acted the part of Lincoln in his own play. In manner he was deliberate, generally serious, and sometimes almost disconcertingly natural.

For instance, when he lunched with us—not a "party"—after lunch he asked John if he could take a short nap. Of course John said yes. And he took off his jacket, lay down in his shirt-sleeves on a sofa in our long hall, shut his eyes and, as the servants say, "dropped off."

On another day I was due in the afternoon at the Continental Hotel to meet a journalist. When I got there and mounted to the terrace I came on John Drinkwater. He greeted me cordially and said, "This is capital meeting you. Now we can have a good talk."

I was obliged to explain regretfully that I had an appointment and must go into the hotel. He said, "What a pity!" and we parted. Owing to a mistake having been made, my journalist did not turn up.

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So I came back to the terrace, found Drinkwater alone there, and said, "After all, we *can* have that talk!"

"Good!" he said.

I sat down beside him, and to my surprise he had nothing to say. He started no subject and seemed absent-minded when I started one. Our "conversation," if it can be called so, was a complete failure. But we parted apparently as good friends as ever, and he did not seem to feel there was anything wrong.

Though later he wrote a very successful comedy called *A Bird in Hand*, he did not strike me as a humorist, and on one occasion the humour of another embarrassed him painfully.

He and his wife, and the little daughter he worshipped, paid a visit to Louxor when his lectures and readings were over, and I happened to go there for a few days at the same time and stayed at the Louxor hotel where they were. Mrs. Drinkwater was practising hard for her coming concert, and he was having a rest.

On the Sunday after I arrived he asked me to come to tea with them in the afternoon in the hotel garden.

"Howard Carter is to have tea with us," he said. "We scarcely know him. Do you know him?"

I said I knew him quite well—if anyone could know Howard Carter quite well.

"Then do come and help us along with him."

"Yes, of course, with pleasure."

Now Howard Carter, known throughout the world as the archaeologist who discovered the wonderful tomb of Tut-ankh-amen, was by no means an easy man to deal with, unless he liked you very much, or was at any rate intimate with you. He had an extraordinary habit of trying to turn everything one said, however serious, into farce, and sometimes of saying things that were decidedly tactless and disagreeable, even perhaps wounding. I thought it quite likely that I should have to "help" Drinkwater "along" with him. And so it proved.

We four sat down to tea, and Drinkwater was obviously anxious to have a serious and informing talk with this man of peculiar knowledge and fame. But Carter was in one of his most mischievous, almost goblin-like moods, and made fun of everything that was said, trying to score a joke, however feeble and far-fetched, off it. This upset Drinkwater, who was certainly far from quick in humorous "uptake," so much that he could not conceal his mental disorder. He blushed, he almost stammered, and scarcely dared to open his lips for fear of having what he said immediately turned into something like ridicule by Carter.

As I was thoroughly accustomed to these unexpected outbursts of archaeological humour, and had frequently suffered from them, I was able to preserve my social self-possession, and did my best to switch

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Carter off into the discussion of some serious subject of which he had knowledge and about which he could, if he chose, be very interesting. But I was by no means successful. Carter seemed bent on upsetting Drinkwater, and our tea in the garden was, I thought, a definite failure. But Drinkwater never referred to it afterwards when I was with him. Before he left Egypt he kindly gave me one of his books with his autograph in it, and asked me for one of mine. He spoke of undertaking a lecturing tour in India and the Far East, as he wanted very much to know more of the world, and told me he could only afford to make journeys if he earned money by making them. This projected tour never came off and he died suddenly at his house in England. He was a very genuine man, quietly aware of his worth but not conceited about it, and very English. I don't think he could speak any foreign language.

To illustrate how tactless Howard Carter sometimes was, I may mention a little experience of my own in connection with him.

Once I was staying in Louxor at the same time as a very well known English official in Egypt, who asked me if I played lawn-tennis. I said I did, but was much out of practice as for some time I had played nothing but golf. He then asked me to have a match against him as he had no one to play with. I agreed, and in the afternoon we went to the tennis-courts in the garden of the Winter Palace Hotel. There we started a singles, and very soon I found that the Englishman played much better than I did. In the first set I managed with difficulty to secure three games to his six. In the two following sets I was badly beaten, getting, I think, only one game in each set. While we were playing, Howard Carter came into the garden with two ladies and a man whom I did not know, and sat down with them on a bench to watch us. The three sets finished, I came off the court with my opponent, and was turning to go to the Louxor Hotel garden when Howard Carter called to me.

Hearing the call, I went to where he was sitting. When I got there, without introducing me to his companions he said, "I only wanted to congratulate you on your tennis."

I made some mild rejoinder, carefully avoiding any show of vexation, and left him to the enjoyment of what he no doubt thought of as my discomfiture. Yet he didn't at all dislike me, and several times after this asked me to lunch alone with him at the Mohamed Aly Club in Cairo. He was extremely rude to John Knittel at the beginning of their acquaintance, but much later on, when we several times met him in St. Moritz in the summer, became quite friendly both with Mrs. Knittel and John. He lectured there on his finds in Egypt and I thought his lecture quite admirable. I believe he was a lonely man, and often he seemed embittered. I don't know why, as he was so very successful and famous. Perhaps it was because the Egyptian Govern-

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ment would not allow him to go on excavating in, or near, the Valley of the Kings. He told me once that he knew exactly where there was another tomb, which he believed must contain as many marvels as the tomb of Tut-ankh-amen.

"But," he added, "they won't let me work on my own, so I keep my secret."

When last I saw him in Switzerland I thought he looked very ill and seemed very nervous. He died in London not long after this. Although we were very often in Louxor at the same time he never asked me into his lonely house in the desert, which I often passed very near to when I was riding. And he never showed me his watercolour paintings or alluded to them. I was told by several people that they were admirable.

Later on I was more successful as a tennis-player against Sir Robert Horne, afterwards Lord Horne. I was in Louxor when he and his sister were there, and had several matches against him in singles, and rather more than held my own in them. At different times I also played in doubles and had very good matches. Once Monsieur Francis de Croisset, the very well known French playwright and novelist, was my partner, and Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Castlerosse (now Lord Kenmare) were lookers-on. When the game was over Lord Castlerosse said, apparently surprised,

"How extraordinarily agile and energetic you both are!"

He was staying on a private steamer Lord Beaverbrook had chartered for the Nile trip, and Monsieur de Croisset and I were invited to dine on board with Mrs. Richard Norton and her pretty sister, now Lady Brownlow. Lord Beaverbrook and his party had come from a visit to Syria, and he told me of the destruction wrought in Damascus in the fighting by the Syrians against the French. He thought it inevitable and did not blame the French. I was on board his steamer with him on two occasions. Then he sailed for Assouan with his party. He looked delicate but full to the brim of will. His career has proved him to be a man possessing something like genius.

Monsieur de Croisset looked, and seemed to me, ill when he was in Egypt, and he told me that he suffered very much from dyspepsia and in his nervous system. I advised him to take Sanatogen and bought him a tin of it, for which he seemed very grateful. He asked me to give him a signed book and gave me one of his signed. He dined with us twice, and once we dined in his company at a large dinner-party given by someone at the Winter Palace Hotel. He sat next to Frances Knittel, and though he liked her he was evidently in a bad mood that night. For when afterwards I asked what they had talked about the only thing she could remember was that, when fish was put before her, he said,

"Ne mangez pas ça! C'est infect!"

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Monsieur de Croisset seemed to me to be the very essence of intelligence, but a very discontented and restless man. I never saw him look happy, but I never saw him look dull. In Cairo he stayed at the Residency with Sir Percy and Lady Loraine, who were there for a long time when we lived at Ain Shems. Sir Percy was High Commissioner. I had known him when I lived in Rome, and had even entertained him at dinner. He was an attaché at the British Embassy then. In Cairo, like all English people, I wrote down my name at the Residency, but I was never invited to go there, and never spoke to Sir Percy. I was introduced to Lady Loraine at a tennis tournament; she sent to ask me into her box there, and I spent about an hour in her company. But this did not lead to any further acquaintance, and when I happened to be close to her again, evidently she did not remember me. Later Sir Miles and Lady Lampson arrived in Cairo. The Residency became the British Embassy, and then I was warmly welcomed within its doors. When Lord Lloyd was High Commissioner before Sir Percy Loraine I was asked to lunch there, though I was only passing through Cairo and was not living in Egypt. I accepted to go, but was unexpectedly taken ill and prevented from leaving my hotel, and unfortunately never met Lord Lloyd and Lady Lloyd, who made herself very popular in Egypt. Of him it was said by the Prince of Wales, who spent a few days with him at the Residency, "Now at last I know what it's like to be entertained by Royalty." While in Egypt the Prince drove a golf-ball from the top of the Great Pyramid.

During the winter season on Sunday afternoons we generally went to the races at the Heliopolis race-course, and finding that my mount, Cookie, had been raced once or twice before we bought him, we entered him for several events, won two of them, and he was placed among the first three for two or three others. Often when before breakfast I was riding back from the desert and we met strings of race-horses mounted by stable hands going out to their exercise, I saw the boys pointing me out, and heard exclamations of "Cookie!" Then I felt very important.

A rather curious incident happened in connection with another of our horses, far the finest we ever had in our stables. It was called Saadan.

When the present King of Egypt was away in England completing his education, his father King Fouad's health began to fail gradually. Possibly because of that, though I don't know the reason, His Majesty had a sale of his horses. John Knittel attended it and bought a very beautiful Arab stallion, trained for riding but very proud and spirited. When I saw him for the first time I thought he looked like a horse for Royal processions. But as King Fouad, so far as I know, never rode while he was on the throne of Egypt—at any rate I never heard of it—I didn't connect this wonderful horse with him as a rider.

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John rode this beautiful animal, and when we were out together I noticed that wherever we went all eyes were fixed on his mount.

"We are getting a big reputation for horse-flesh," I said.

John replied that he believed he had under him the best riding-horse —apart from race-horses—in the whole of Egypt.

King Fouad's health failed and he died. His son was telegraphed for, and hastened back to the palace at Koubbeh, near where we lived.

John and I had left for Europe, where John had to produce his play, *Protectorate*, in Berne. Frances was still in Egypt waiting till the schools closed for the summer and the children were free to travel.

Just before the boat on which they had engaged cabins for the voyage from Alexandria was due to sail, Frances was sitting on deck with some friends when the captain of the *El Nil* came to them and told her that Mourad Mohsen Pasha wanted to see her. She thought there must be some mistake, but was assured that he had travelled from Cairo to Alexandria, hearing that she was on the point of sailing and that John had already left. She saw the Pasha, who asked her to write a message for our butler, Ibrahim, giving orders to him to deliver John's horse, Saadan, to a messenger from Koubbeh Palace, as he was the new King's favourite horse and His Majesty had been greatly surprised to hear that it had been sold by the late King's orders.

Poor Frances did not know what to do. The horse belonged to John, not to her.

She left the Pasha for a moment and consulted our friend, "Doctor Willy," who had come to see her and the children off.

Doctor Willy said, "You can't refuse the demand of the King."

So Frances complied with Mourad Pasha's request.

When she arrived in Berne she had to break the news to John that he had lost his beautiful horse.

John was naturally upset, but he said, "I'm not a horse-dealer. If the King wants Saadan, let him have the horse as a present from me."

And he sent a letter to Hassanein Pasha to tell His Majesty (on John's behalf) how happy he was to be able to restore to His Majesty his favourite riding-horse, and to beg the King to be kind enough to accept the horse as a present from him.

In answer to this communication John eventually received the following letter:

Palais d'Abdine,
Cairo,
Le 9/5, 1936.

Dear Mr. Knittel,

When you receive this letter Mrs. Knittel will have already told you all about the horse you bought from the Khassa stables.

On coming back to Cairo H.M. King Farouk inquired about His Majesty's

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two riders, and when told we had sold them with the other horses, His Majesty expressed the desire to get them back. Fortunately we were able to communicate with Mrs. Knittel on board the ship and she was so good as to give us permission to take the horse away.

His Majesty was most pleased and commanded me to thank you and Mrs. Knittel for so great a courtesy.

I shall be much obliged if you would kindly confirm Mrs. Knittel's permission to take the horse back and let me know at the same time the amount of all the expenses you incurred for the horse since the time you purchased it. I shall be glad, according to His Majesty's orders, to refund to you the price paid and expenses. Thanking you in advance, I remain,

Yrs. sincerely,

Mourad Mohsen,
Director General.

Thus amicably ended our connection with Saadan, the most beautiful horse we ever had in our stables.

I have sometimes thought of Cairo as the City of Prime Ministers. In Egypt Ministers come and go with a rapidity which is disconcerting. Political friends and adherents become political enemies and opponents overnight. I am, thank God, no politician, though I have no such hatred of politicians as, for instance, Alphonse Daudet had. Some of them, for all I know, may in private life be quite as worthy individuals as, say, novelists are. In England I have never "moved" in strictly political circles and have met socially not many Prime Ministers. I have met Lord Balfour and Lord Oxford, and I have met Mr. Winston Churchill. But I don't think I have become acquainted with any of the other English Premiers of my time, although I have heard some of them make big speeches, including Mr. Gladstone, Lord Salisbury and one or two others. I have seen Lord Beaconsfield but never spoke to him, and the only at all really intimate things I have been told about him came to me from the lips of Princess Beatrice on one occasion, when I had the honour of talking with Her Royal Highness at a tea given for her by a Court lady in London, and from Lord Rowton, who was Lord Beaconsfield's devoted friend and admirer. But in Egypt, if you go anywhere, it is difficult not to come across either the Prime Minister of the moment or men who have been Prime Ministers, and I was no exception to the rule.

As I write, the present Prime Minister of Egypt is Nahas Pasha, and he happens to be the one I have known best, both in and out of office. Several times the Knittels and I gave dinners for him and his closest political friends at our house, I believe arousing by this hospitality a good deal of disapproval among some of our British friends and acquaintances. For though Nahas Pasha was the adored of the students and the crowds in the streets, there was a time when he was distrusted

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by the British, who thought he was Britain's enemy. That is changed now and the Pasha is considered to be one of our warmest friends. So our intimacy with him in Dar Ain Shems is, I hope, forgiven if it is remembered at all.

Aly Maher and his wife also dined with us. The only other Egyptian who had been Prime Minister, and who came to us, was, I think, Mohamed Mahmoud Pasha, whom John knew intimately, and whom Mrs. Knittel and I had a very pleasant acquaintance with. We also knew his charming family and appreciated the dignity and cordiality of his wife.

Besides these outstanding men I met Nessim Pasha and had some talk with him, and encountered at a dinner given by Sir Charlton Spinks Pasha, Inspector-General of the Egyptian Army, and Lady Spinks, Yehia Pasha when he was Prime Minister. I also met Adly Pasha, a dark, very silent man.

Nahas Pasha is a very energetic and ambitious man, and apparently a born leader of crowds, with, for them, an inspiring personality. His popularity has been immense and may be now, though I am too far from Egypt at present to judge of it. Although I am English to the core, I have always found him buoyantly friendly, and ready to receive and to return hospitality. Once he gave in his private house a great Egyptian tea-party at which the Knittels and I were the only foreigners. We sat round one immense table and had a glorious time, feeling quite at home. But we were very fond, and still are, of the Egyptians, because we know personally their good qualities, their readiness to be friendly, and their wonderful tradition of hospitality, almost unequalled, I should think, in the countries of Europe.

Nahas Pasha is at times very impulsive. I had an instance of this once at Louxor.

I happened to be paying one of my very frequent visits there when, on a political tour, while he was out of office and was being furiously attacked by a Prime Minister who was a political rival, he arrived there one evening by train from Assouan. For some reason which I forget I had to go to the station, and was astonished to find in it, and before it, an enormous crowd, which seemed to contain all the inhabitants of the big village and of the entire neighbourhood.

"Who is expected?" I asked.

The reply was astonishing.

"The Crown Princess of Italy," I was told.

This was the Belgian Princess who married the King of Italy's heir.

A red carpet covered part of the platform. A long white train presently drew in and the Princess got out of a saloon carriage, crossed the platform accompanied by bowing officials, and disappeared into a waiting motor-car.

The huge crowd, however, remained, and soon I knew why.

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Directly the Princess and her attendants had gone a mighty cheer arose from thousands of throats, and coming from the part of the train beyond the Royal saloon, almost fighting his way, but always with a radiant smile, through a frenzied multitude, appeared my friend Nahas Pasha.

Then really Bedlam broke loose. The masses of people seemed to go mad—but with joy. Their hero had come to visit them and it seemed to me that they would kill him with their rapture. He vanished at last in the struggling multitudes, engulfed in a sea of humanity, and was swept away to the Winter Palace Hotel, where I was glad to hear he arrived, living and—smiling!

Two or three days later he was due to depart on board a private steamer, accompanied by his adherents, to make a political progress from village to village, or village to town, till at length he reached Cairo. I went out to see his departure.

Again an enormous crowd before his hotel at the place of embarkation! He came. He chanced to see me. He struggled towards me and grasped my hand.

"Come with us!" he exclaimed. "You are an English writer. You have been a journalist, haven't you?"

"Yes!" I said.

"Splendid! Come with us on the steamer as my guest, and you, an Englishman, shall report on all you see for the great London papers!"

This was almost shouted in French. Nahas has always talked French to us.

I had, of course, to refuse his offer. Had I accepted it, my English friends in Cairo would certainly have thought I had taken leave of my senses. I murmured, or shouted perhaps, regret and explanations about not having packed for a journey and having only what I stood up in—not even a toothbrush. A siren sounded, I suppose on the steamer. The crowd set up an answering yell. The great spell-binder was whirled from my side, and almost directly the vessel, decorated from bow to stern with multitudes of flags, puffed away on the bosom of the Nile, while I retired disordered and panting to the Louxor Hotel.

One little incident showed what intense antagonism some English felt towards Nahas Pasha while we were in Egypt.

The Knittels and I gave two or three large receptions at the Aquarium Island in the Cairo Zoological Gardens, to which we asked all those whom we knew. For the afternoon we, as it were, possessed the Island, and had a species of great garden-party there, with a buffet, the band of the Eleventh Hussars, and quantities of little tables at which people could sit, eat, drink and talk. At one of these parties I was talking to an Englishman who has lived in Egypt for many years when Nahas Pasha arrived, as always, very late. Of course, directly I—and my Englishman—saw him I got up to go and greet him.

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To my amazement, the friend I was talking to seized my arm and exclaimed, "That man here! No, you shan't go! I won't let you go to him!"

"He's my guest!" I said. "Please don't hold me!"

But I had actually to break away from his grasp before I could go to the Pasha.

Of course, if I had believed that Nahas was really an enemy of my country I should have had nothing to do with him. But I knew he was not, but was only anxious to persuade Britain to understand that Egypt wanted to have the right to put her own house in order. Since then a great step has been taken in this direction.

Aly Maher Pasha, whom I knew, and to whose hospitable house I went several times, is thought by a good many people to be the cleverest politician in Egypt. He has been Prime Minister, and also head of the Royal Cabinet at the palace. He is certainly extremely astute. He has a very intelligent wife, and a young son who is obviously as sharp as a needle. Besides being with them occasionally in Egypt, I have met them in Zürich.

The last time they were there, quite unexpectedly I came across the Pasha in Bahnhof Strasse. He was staying at the Hôtel Baur au Lac and invited me to dine there.

"Just my wife, my son and I," he said. "I want to ask you something."

(This was when he was practically in charge of the political education of the young King Farouk.)

I accepted and went, and had an interesting evening with them. His boy dined with us and took part in the conversation.

After dinner the Pasha told me he wanted to get hold of some first-rate books on political economy, modern politics, the European situation, etc., for the young King to study. Could I help him in this by any suggestions? We had a long talk, and eventually we parted after I had given him a promise to consult a very clever young man whom I knew at Cambridge by letter, and to find out what were the latest and most authoritative books on the subjects he had mentioned. I fulfilled this promise, got a list of books, and they were sent out to Egypt, and I suppose handed over to His Majesty. Aly Maher Pasha certainly took his political duties with great seriousness at that time.

Mohamed Mahmoud Pasha was a special friend of John Knittel's, but I knew him too, and liked him greatly. He had bad health unfortunately, and scarcely ever appeared in general society. But when John and I decided for once to give a men's dinner in our house we induced him to come to it.

That night, besides the Pasha, we had Baron de Bildt, the Swedish Minister to Egypt; Chawky Pasha, the Turkish Minister; Monsieur Martin, the Swiss Minister; Sir Robert Greg; and Mr. Elbert, the

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first secretary at the American Legation. Mohamed Mahmoud Pasha was the last to turn up. We had not said he was coming, and all our guests were astonished to see him. He came, I am sure, because of his friendship for John. He was Prime Minister of Egypt more than once. He died too early and we were grieved at his death.

Makram Ebeid Pasha was Nahas Pasha's closest friend and adviser when we were in Egypt, and always dined with us when Nahas came, and brought his wife with him. He is a brilliantly clever man and the most prominent lawyer in Egypt. But he is a Copt. Whether that is partly the reason why he has recently been expelled, as I understand, from the Wafd, Nahas Pasha's party, I don't know. I cannot imagine Nahas without him. They were inseparable. Makram is a splendid speaker, one of the best, if not the best, in Egypt. His wife and her family, of which Hanna Pasha was the head, were good friends of ours in Egypt.

In some respects the most remarkable man we came to know in Egypt while we lived in Ain Shems was Doctor Taha Hussein, Dean of the faculty of English literature at the Cairo University. He had been born blind, yet he became a power among the students of Cairo. He is a well-known author, an admirable teacher and speaker, is a journalist, and has been an editor.

When we came to Egypt John soon met him and was immediately struck by his great intelligence.

John, who was a member of the P.E.N. Club, and had met its President, Mr. John Galsworthy, founded a branch of the club in Cairo, and suggested to Galsworthy that Taha Hussein would be a suitable President of it. He sent to Galsworthy a copy of Taha Hussein's *An Egyptian Childhood*, which Galsworthy was delighted with, and Galsworthy asked John to arrange with Taha Hussein that he should become the Cairo club's first President.

Taha Hussein studied in Paris and married a French wife, who has devoted her life to caring for him. He has two children, who are very French in feeling.

Before I made this Egyptian phenomenon's acquaintance I had read his *Egyptian Childhood*, which I advise everyone who can get it to read. It is well translated into English and has extraordinary charm.

I heard him speak at a P.E.N. Club dinner, went to his house and he came to ours.

It is still a mystery to me how he has obtained his mastery of the knowledge he displays with such ease and fluency.

For instance, he lectures on such subjects as French poetry to crowded audiences. At the P.E.N. Club dinners he makes speeches dealing with the attributes and careers of those who are guests of honour. He goes often into society. As I said, he has edited a newspaper. Yet he has never seen anything. I once talked to him about French acting, and

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he seemed quite at home in theatrical matters connected with the French stage. He dined with us, came to tea, and sat and talked in the garden under our big ficus tree.

Dar Ain Shems was on the way to Marg, and not far off. Our neighbours there, in a country house set in the midst of a large and most beautifully planned domain, were King Fouad's sister, Princess Nemet Mouktar Pasha, and her husband, Mahmoud Mouktar Pasha, a Turkish general and statesman, who had had a brilliant career as a fighting soldier, and, on retiring from the army, had been Turkish Ambassador at the Kaiser's Court in Berlin. The Princess is the youngest child of the late Ismail Pasha, and for a long time lived with her husband on the Bosphorus.

We made their acquaintance, and were sometimes invited to lunch or tea with them in their garden, where we were received by a Eunuch in a frock-coat, and waited on by women, who dispersed the flies, when there were any, with large rustling implements not unlike small imitations of garden brooms, but more decorative. Usually there were other guests, but occasionally we were alone with the family, and several times I was there with only the Pasha, as he had made a golf-course of nine holes at a short distance from the house, and now and then we had a game there together. This was followed by a tea *à deux,* served on a table which was carried out by a man-servant and placed in some convenient and sheltered nook.

Those were pleasant experiences and I looked forward to them. The cuisine was mainly Turkish and very delicious, and the conversation was never banal, for both the Princess and her husband were highly intelligent and well informed, and had none of the frivolity of ordinary society worldlings. They cared for what was interesting and were interesting themselves. Their daughter, afterwards Madame Fouat Tugay, married to a Turkish diplomat, was also very friendly and well informed, and their youngest son, Alaelddin,was a charming go-ahead youth, who eventually became a great help to his mother. He knew the children, and one night about Christmas-time came to a fancy-dress dinner we gave at which everybody, except I think one guest, was in Travesty. And this friend, at his own request, was excused from pretending to be someone, or something, that he wasn't, and turned up in ordinary evening dress. He was Marquis d'Alcedo, our Spanish friend, who came every winter to Egypt and often drove over from Cairo to visit us.

Mahmoud Mouktar Pasha was a quite exceptionally interesting man, and had, I think, an exceedingly complex character. As a soldier he had been notorious for his daring and courage, and had greatly distinguished himself in more than one war. But he was not only a soldier. He had the qualities of a statesman. He was an excellent

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writer and had translated a great deal of the Koran into beautiful French. He was a mystic, and he was something of an alchemist. In addition to all this he was a *charmeur* and an accomplished man of the world. I have seldom been with a man who had more fascination.

As our house lay on his way home from Cairo, rather often he paid us a visit between five and eight o'clock, and sat talking for an hour or two, telling us of his experiences in Turkish wars, or discussing European affairs, the trend of events and the probable results of them. I noticed that, though I believe when young he had trained as a soldier with the German army, and before we knew him had been Turkish Ambassador in Berlin, he never to me expressed any either pro-German or anti-German sentiments. He had been a diplomatist, and sometimes one felt it. As a friend no one could have been more delightful, and I preferred his company to that of almost any other man in Egypt whom I knew well. He was certainly a deeply religious and convinced Moslem, and did not mind, as some do, talking about religion. He gave me his French translation of many parts of the Koran, and to Mrs. Knittel a signed photograph to add to her collection. He also gave me a book he had written on events in his military life. A good many times I had long talks with him alone. We had only one unfortunate experience in connection with Mouktar Pasha. Although we had often been entertained at luncheon at Marg, we had never persuaded him to lunch or dine with us. The Princess, of course, never accepted invitations to the private houses of those not belonging to her family. At last, however, he did accept an invitation to dinner, to meet some people he knew. The date of this dinner was given to him verbally when he was at our house. On the night before the date fixed, when John and I were away in Cairo, and Mrs. Knittel had retired to bed not feeling well, a car drove up, our bell rang, and, to his horror, Ibrahim, when he answered it, found Mouktar Pasha on the doorstep in "full evening dress." He had mistaken the night. He was let in, and in a few minutes Mrs. Knittel appeared and explanations and apologies followed. But there was no dinner in the house to give him! So the social tragedy was irreparable. He took it all in the most charming way, and presently drove home.

This happened very shortly before he departed unexpectedly alone on a visit to Europe. He died on the voyage. Apparently he had been ill for a long time but had concealed the fact from everybody. We all missed him very much, especially towards evening when he had so often paid us a little visit.

A long while afterwards the Princess, emerging from her mourning for him, asked us to come once more to see her. As we drove up the long garden we saw, as usual, the Eunuch in his frock-coat standing on the path to receive us. When I got out of the car, and he saw who we were, he burst into tears. I am sure he knew how greatly we

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had appreciated the dead man and therefore was not ashamed of his grief. I shook his thin hand and he saw I shared it.

Among many other interesting people I came across during our long stay in Egypt there was an outstanding man whose name and fame are known all over the world, and who seems equally at home in the East, from which he comes, and in the West, where he has innumerable friends and passes the major part of his time. Him I met first at the donkey-races on the little race-course of Louxor, where he was watching with the keen attention of a racing connoisseur the performances of tourists competing against each other on "Mrs. Langtry," "Sweet Chocolate," "Jolly Lad," "Ramses the Great" and other impetuous animals.

This was the Aga Khan, or, to give him his full title, His Highness the Prince Aga Khan.

The Aga Khan is, of course, a Moslem. He is a direct descendant of the Prophet who founded Islam, and is the spiritual head of a sect of Mohammedans scattered throughout Persia and India, and numbering, I am told, over two millions of people. He is one of the richest men in the world. But apart from these claims on the attention of humanity he is a very remarkable man; a great traveller with a wide knowledge of the globe, a highly educated and extremely intelligent person, an omnivorous reader, an ardent sportsman, an impassioned golfer, a lover of music—especially of opera—a *bon vivant*, a linguist, an admirable conversationalist with a keen sense of humour and an equally keen sense of drama, and one who, in spite of his immense notoriety, has not an ounce of affectation or self-consciousness in him. He has won the Derby and he has been President of the League of Nations.

At the Louxor races I happened to be standing up at the back of the rows of benches on which the spectators were sitting when a young Englishman, who was a stranger to me, came up and said,

"May I introduce myself to you? I am in attendance on the Prince Aga Khan. He knows some of your books and would be glad to know you. Will you allow me to present you to him? He is making a short stay at the Winter Palace Hotel."

I said I should be delighted, and was forthwith introduced to His Highness, and thus began an acquaintance which has been a source of pleasure to me. We met several times in Louxor. I introduced my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Knittel. The Aga Khan invited us all to lunch at his hotel and came to lunch with us at ours, the Hôtel de Louxor, where we stay unless we have rented the bungalow close by in the garden. Since then I have met His Highness in Switzerland, and a few days ago I dined with him in Zürich and accompanied him to the opera to hear Mozart's opera *Seraglio*. The Aga Khan delights in good orchestral music, and recently when Herr Furtwängler conducted

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two concerts in Zürich, repeating at the second the same programme he had chosen for the first, the Aga Khan was at both of the concerts.

In Louxor he talked to me about his racing experiences, what they had cost him and what they had brought in to his exchequer. Another time, turning to a totally different subject, he asked me if I had ever read James Joyce's *Ulysses*. I said I had tried to three or four times, having bought the book and resolved to tackle it in spite of its enormous length.

"Did you get through it all?" he said.

I confessed that, though I can read very long books, and have read every word of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* four times, James Joyce had been too much for me. I had never read *Ulysses* through to the end. I added that I had asked several people, who swore they had read it, whether they had really managed to endure to the close of the final chapter, and that they had all finally acknowledged that they had not. The Aga Khan then told me he couldn't get through it, and said, "Is it really a great work?"

I said that many people professed to think it so, and that Miss Rebecca West had written of "the majestic genius of James Joyce." Finally we agreed that at any rate *Ulysses* was child's play in comparison with Joyce's last book, *Finnegan's Wake*. Yet I had met a man in Morocco, a sculptor, who professed to delight in that, though he could not understand the language in which it was written. And we both agreed that there was an immense amount of humbug and snobbery connected with literature as well as with the art of painting. And I told him that once in Munich I had visited a collection of modern paintings, the *clou* of which was a picture representing a camel wearing a *chapeau de forme* and processing through a torrent of fireworks, and had heard people going into ecstasies about its originality and truth to nature. We decided that there is indeed no use in disputing about tastes.

The Aga Khan, when he is in reach of a golf-course, plays golf every day, and seems never to tire of this game, which has been the joy and the despair of so many. His handicap is ten. I never played golf until I was by no means young, and have never shone at it. I think my affection for lawn-tennis has been a handicap to me. John Knittel, who is such a good golfer, has never really taken to lawn-tennis. But I know one extremely fine tennis-player, the Honourable F. M. B. Fisher, who, when he considered that he was getting rather too old for Wimbledon, began to concentrate on golf, and I believe has become an excellent golfer. I think he was the cleverest tennis-player in doubles whom I have ever seen, and I delighted in watching him at Wimbledon and elsewhere. When I lived in Egypt we met again, and I saw him and his partner win the championship of the doubles with brilliant ease at the Cairo Tournament. He lives now in his

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native land, New Zealand, and writes to me now and then from there.

I saw some very fine tennis while I lived in Egypt, and made the acquaintance there of, I suppose, the greatest lawn-tennis player the world has known. A friend of mine told me that Mr. W. J. Tilden, who had come to Egypt with other players on a professional tour, would like to know me. He was staying at the Mena House Hotel, and I wrote to him there and asked him to lunch at Shepheard's Hotel with me. He replied accepting and asking if he could bring a friend with him. We met and had a long talk, not only about tennis, though I could not help questioning him about the most extraordinary match in a tournament that I had ever seen.

This was Tilden's match against the French champion, Cochet, at the Wimbledon Tournament.

Tilden, playing magnificently, entirely dominated Cochet through two sets, and was within an ace of winning the third set and the match when King Alfonso of Spain arrived, and the enormous crowd rose to its feet as a sign of respect for His Majesty. For a couple of minutes the two players had to stop the game.

This pause seemed to have an extraordinary effect upon Tilden. I suppose it broke through his concentration on the great game. Anyhow, when it was resumed his amazing brilliance deserted him and the incredible happened. Although he had only to win a few strokes—four or five, I believe—to finish the match, he could not bring them off, and Cochet, who had to win three sets to beat him, won them.

We talked about this at lunch, and Tilden told me that he had never understood why he lost.

"Something seemed to happen to me," he said, "after the King came and the game was stopped. Do what I would, I couldn't get going again."

I mentioned to him the widespread rumour that after the King of Spain arrived he deliberately threw away several games to Cochet, in order that the King might not be disappointed by only seeing him play the few strokes he needed to win the match. He said that this was not true. He played all the time to win but was unable to win.

"My power to concentrate seemed to snap," he said.

Tilden has other interests besides lawn-tennis, and he talked of them with me. He has a great love of literature and also of acting. He even said that sometimes when, walking in New York or some other American city with a friend celebrated in literature or one of the arts, passers-by noticed him, and he heard them say, "Look! There goes Tilden!" he felt quite ashamed to be singled out for public attention while his friend was ignored.

"Can't be helped!" I said. "The man in the street is always most impressed by a sportsman."

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And then I told him of an incident which had happened to me.

I was with the actor, Norman Forbes, at a big tennis tournament in England. Between two matches we were strolling about, and I noticed a couple of schoolboys following us with the evident intention of trying to speak to us. Both of them carried small autograph books. Presently we stopped for a moment.

The boys came up and the elder of them said to me rather shyly, "Sir, would you mind very much signing your name in our autograph books?"

I was convinced that they took me for someone else and replied, "Do you really want *my* name?"

"Yes, indeed, sir," he said. "Aren't you Mr. Roper Barrett?"

(Roper Barrett was a famous tennis-player and captain of our Davis Cup team for a long time. He never had the slightest resemblance to me.)

"No," I said, "my name's Robert Hichens, not Roper Barrett."

The boys' faces fell, and the elder one said, "Oh—sorry, sir!"

And they made off at once in search of real prey.

Pat Hughes, the double tennis champion, is a good friend of mine, and he came out to Egypt to play in tournaments while we were there, and came to our house. He is a great player and a charming fellow with a very shrewd sense of humour. He has travelled nearly all over the world playing tennis, although he is in a big sports business in London. He told me many stories of the inside happenings connected with tennis tournaments, and how, in critical moments, some very famous performers try to "queer the pitch" of their opponents without letting the public suspect it.

I also met Baron von Cramm, the German champion, in Egypt, perhaps the most graceful, though virile, player I have ever seen; a chivalrous player too.

Often I long for another Wimbledon! Shall I ever see one again? I used to travel to England each year for that delightful fortnight, and stay at the Woodcote Park Country Club for it, never missing a day. Sport there brought the nations together. Now they are severed by war. The last I heard of Baron von Cramm was that he was serving as a soldier in the ranks of the German army. He took part in the invasion of Holland, and having a few hours of freedom from service visited a friend of mine who has an estate there. He was not an officer but what we call a ranker. What a change from being one of the greatest stars in tournaments over half the world!

To turn from tennis to music.

Several famous musicians came to our Egyptian bungalow. Chief among them were Herr Wilhelm Furtwängler, the great German conductor; Monsieur Brailowsky, the Russian virtuoso; Herr Hubermann, the violinist who eventually founded the Jewish orchestra

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in Palestine, which became so excellent that Toscanini travelled out to conduct it and brought it to Cairo; and last, not least, the enchanting Austrian singer, Madame Elizabeth Schumann.

Herr Furtwängler's arrival was very characteristic. He came to Egypt to have a holiday from work, and made his home in our house while he was there.

John went to meet him at Alexandria. They arrived together at Ain Shems in the afternoon. He was warmly welcomed by us all and shown round our little property. When he visited the stables and saw our three horses he looked extremely pleased. I had not known till then how fond of horses he was. But before long I realized his fondness, for at teatime, when he did not appear, and I inquired about him, I was informed to my astonishment that he had gone out riding into the desert, and moreover that he was riding alone.

"But he doesn't know the country," I said. "Will he find his way back?"

Twilight stole over the garden. The horseman had not returned. Darkness gathered. I began to feel anxious. But presently we heard the welcome sound of a horse's hooves in the drive, and the great conductor appeared, safe and sound, and evidently delighted with his escapade; the sportsman in him, the adventurer in a foreign land, thoroughly satisfied.

Although Herr Furtwängler came to us nominally to have a holiday, and of course to see Egypt, his passion for work had to be appeased, and he spent many hours in the drawing-room, where the grand piano stood, composing. As the news of his arrival was put in all the papers, a great many people wanted to get at him, but, as he wished it, we protected him against intruders, and during his stay with us he managed to have plenty of time to himself, and in the intervals of sight-seeing often sat with John under the ficus tree, sipping coffee and talking. The two girls were now working hard on their music, being both of them ardently musical, and Doreen, the elder, received an unexpected and alarming suggestion from the great master.

When we were at home, almost every evening he played to us on the piano, usually Beethoven, and one day at teatime, finding that Doreen, with her master, Mr. Harry Mayer, had been working at a piano concerto by Beethoven which she was soon going to play in public at a students' concert with Harry Mayer at the second piano, he said, "There's another piano in the house, isn't there?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Let's have it brought into the drawing-room tonight and Doreen and I will play her concerto together. I'll take the orchestral part."

Doreen was half delighted, I think, and half terrified. A great honour was conferred on her, but a great obligation was attached to

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it. However, the servants carried in the second piano, and directly after dinner we had the performance.

I thought it went wonderfully well. Doreen did her very best, and Herr Furtwängler at the second piano really suggested an orchestra. When the concerto was finished he praised her, and then gave her a number of hints and suggestions for a future performance. He was charming with the children and not in the least overpowering.

While he was with us he had to deal with a very important piece of business concerning the future, which he talked over with John and even with me. The American Committee of Management of the famous New York Philharmonic Orchestra asked him to become its conductor in the place of Signor Toscanini, who had resigned from that post. Cables arrived and cables had to be sent. After several days of hesitation and discussion Herr Furtwängler decided to refuse the offer and cabled his refusal.

I had wanted him to accept and tried to persuade him, but in vain. America's loss was Europe's advantage.

That delightful artist, Elizabeth Schumann, was in Egypt while Furtwängler was there and gave two concerts in Cairo to crowded audiences. I went to both, as I had heard her in the opera-house of Vienna and delighted in her great talent. She was a friend of Herr Furtwängler, came to our house, and we visited some sights together. I have a photograph showing her flanked by Herr Furtwängler and me sitting out of doors after a picnic in a palm grove.

We got up a dinner for her. I never ask any great singer or pianist who comes to my house to make music for me. The Knittels feel as I do about this, and we, of course, had no intention of asking Elizabeth Schumann to sing, though Herr Furtwängler would be there to accompany her. But he told me privately that he would persuade her to sing after dinner if possible.

However, our man cook provided such an excellent dinner that Madame Elizabeth, when spoken to by Herr Furtwängler after dinner was over, exclaimed,

"Sing after such a dinner! Impossible!"

And she was quite right.

A number of guests came to meet her and Herr Furtwängler, including Princess Clementine of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and her husband Herr de Heller; Sir Robert and Lady Greg, who loved music; Baron de Bildt; and two or three more.

Although we had no *Lieder*, while we were at dinner Herr Furtwängler said to Elizabeth Schumann,

"Do the canary!"

And, like a ventriloquist, apparently without moving her lips, she gave a prolonged and exquisite imitation of a canary bird in full song. Dinner didn't prevent that. We all delighted in Madame Schumann

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and were sorry to part from her. Each Christmas, till prevented by the war, from America she has sent us all greetings. I believe, like many other people famous in music, she is living there during the war. Monsieur Brailowsky and Herr Hubermann are also there with many others.

Herr Furtwängler went up the Nile with John as his cicerone, and also visited the Red Sea with him before he returned to Europe. He rode several times from our stable and also drove our Buick. Like Brailowsky, he is an ardent chauffeur. He is also a devotee of the ski, and not very long ago was laid up for months after a severe accident which befell him while ski-ing. Doubled in him with one of the greatest musicians of our time is evidently an intrepid sportsman. He often comes to Zürich, where I am writing this, and conducts both orchestral concerts and occasionally opera.

It was interesting to compare his methods with Signor Toscanini's, who brought to Cairo the Jewish orchestra from Palestine and gave us two concerts, which of course I went to.

Toscanini as a conductor reminds me of Casals as 'cellist. Both are impeccably artistic, supremely accomplished, wonderfully satisfying, and both seem to me absolutely determined to let the composers they deal with utter their message, without adding anything strictly and obviously personal to it. They are very great artists. But Herr Furtwängler, while giving gloriously the message of each composer he conveys to us, seems to add something of his own, irresistibly compelled to do this by his temperament. And I can only say that this Furtwängler-something, if I may call it so, stirs in me an excitement, and enthusiasm, which I would not away with. Under his baton, well-worn classical works seem to me to take on a fresh and almost overpowering meaning and power, to come forth fresh from the mint like gold that has lost none of its lustre by use.

I think I have enjoyed music under nearly all the great conductors of my time, from Richter, Nikisch, Mottl, Weingartner, etc., onwards. From none have I had more intense pleasure than from the conducting of Furtwängler.

When he first visited England, before I had heard an orchestra conducted by him, he was very coldly received by the critics, who seemed to think him merely a fairly competent but ordinary *chef d'orchestre*. I read their critiques, and said to John, who had been to his concerts out of England:

"Is he really very fine?"

"You must hear him and judge for yourself."

At last I did hear the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by him, and at once realized how great he was.

Outraged by the English critiques, I wrote a long letter to the editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, whose critic, Robin Legge, whom I

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knew, had been specially cold about Herr Furtwängler's talent, protesting against the unfairness with which a great man was being treated in London. I knew, of course, that my letter would be shown to Robin Legge, and wished him to see it. It was shown, and I received an angry letter from him, expressing his astonishment at my conduct in attacking one who in former years had been one of my colleagues. He wrote of my "going behind" him, not supposing the editor would show him my letter.

In reply I wrote to him "rubbing in" all I had put in my first letter, and adding that when I had written it to the editor I had been sure he would be given it to read. In conclusion I wrote that I was also sure that the inability of the London critics to understand a great man's talent when he came among them would not be shared by the British public. The event proved me right. Whenever Herr Furtwängler gave a concert in London the hall was immediately sold out, and at the end of the concert he was frantically applauded.

The critics think they lead the public, but often they are led by the public.

My friend Brailowsky, the great Russian pianist, told me that though he had travelled and played with enormous success all over the world the London critics were the only ones who damned him with faint praise. He did not complain about this, but only stated it. His concerts in Egypt were extremely successful. He and his very pretty wife came to Ain Shems and sat in our garden.

Herr Hubermann also came, and proved to be a clever and interesting man altogether apart from his musical genius. I went to his concerts. At one of them in the middle of the last movement of a Brahms sonata one of the strings of his violin snapped and he had to stop and leave the platform to repair the damage. He has done great things among his compatriots, the Jews, for music in Palestine.

Signor Toscanini's two concerts with this Jewish orchestra, formed by Hubermann, were extremely successful in Cairo. I do not know Signor Toscanini, but after the second concert I went one day to lunch with an American friend at the Semiramis Hotel. I arrived too early and went into the great hall to wait. Only one person was there in that vast solitude, a man sitting with bowed head on a sofa exactly in the middle of the room. It was Signor Toscanini wrapped in thought. In a moment my friend, an American lady, arrived. She suggested that we should have cocktails before going in to lunch, and we went to sit in a far corner near a window that looked on the Nile. While we were sitting there Signor Toscanini got up from his sofa and began to walk slowly around the hall, still evidently in deep thought. He passed and repassed us several times, without noticing us. He seemed lost to the world about him.

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"He must be thinking out an orchestral score," I murmured to my companion. "Probably visualizing it."

Just before we went in to lunch his wife arrived and woke him out of his entranced reverie, which I am convinced was connected with music.

XXVII

WHEN we decided to settle in Egypt and to make our home there, not for ever but for several years, we hoped to be able to be there each year for at least eight months, and to spend June, July, August and September in Europe. October is quite a bearable month for Europeans in Egypt. November is one of the most perfect months of the whole year, especially if one is staying in Upper Egypt. But we found that the intense heat of April was sometimes exhausting. April, it seems, is often one of the hottest months of the twelve. And generally we fled to Europe at the end of that month, beginning to feel afraid of the sun.

Once, however, when the Knittels left I remained behind.

I have always been enamoured of Mena House, the great hotel at the foot of the Pyramids, since my first visit to Egypt, and during our six years' tenancy of Dar Ain Shems I often stayed there for a few days, played a great deal of tennis on the hard courts in the garden against the professional, wandered about in the adjoining desert, and received visits from my friends in, and near, Cairo. I generally had a room with a terrace facing the Great Pyramid, and was never tired of looking in all hours at my monstrous neighbour, for the Great Pyramid seems often to change its colour with the variations of light. I have seen it as a golden marvel. I have seen it apparently very deep blue. I have seen it black, and I have seen it snow-white.

One year, when I was writing a novel called in the English edition "*Susie's*" *Career*, and in the American *The Pyramid*, I decided to remain on at Mena House from the middle of April till the beginning of June, and engaged rooms in the new part of the building added on during Mr. Baehler's long reign. But as departures were many, owing to the great heat, they were soon closed, and I moved to rooms over the main entrance.

Towards the middle of May I camped out for a couple of weeks on high ground beyond the Pyramids, with Mario Fusco, an Italian friend, who had been born and lived permanently in Egypt.

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Every day I spent some hours in the hotel working on my book, but the early mornings, the late afternoons and evenings, and of course the nights, were spent in the camp. We had two horses there with us and rode every day in the desert, generally at sunrise and when evening was coming on. My book dealt with the life of a young opera-singer, and contained a rather intimate study of a cosmopolitan Greek woman, extremely modern, subtle, with a varnish of Paris, yet fundamentally Greek. The young prima donna was an American, her lover an Austrian. Two other men who played important parts in the story were respectively English and Roumanian. One of the chief scenes in the book was an ascent of the Great Pyramid by night, undertaken by the young prima donna and her Austrian lover without the help of a guide. I had climbed to the top of the Pyramid, but only in daylight and accompanied by two Arabs.

This night scene was suggested to me by a real, not fictitious incident.

One dark but clear night, when I was out on my terrace alone very late, I was astonished to see in the direction of the Great Pyramid, and apparently close to its base, a light, like an earth-bound star, which, as I watched it, began to move upwards. Slowly but steadily it mounted through the velvety blackness, up and up as if its destiny were the starry firmament; for though there was no moon the unclouded sky was populated by thousands of those stars that seem to shine almost fiercely sometimes in African nights.

Some intrepid being must be climbing the Great Pyramid in the dark.

I stood watching till the light ceased to move, and I knew the climber had reached the small platform at the top of the Pyramid, where I had once stood and looked down over the plain where Cairo lies stretched beside the great Nile.

There was a long pause. Then the light began to descend, much more quickly than it had mounted, and wavered from time to time, moving from side to side. He who carried it must be leaping downwards from block to block of the quarried stone.

I left my terrace, went below, and out to the entrance of the garden that lies in front of the hotel, passing through the deserted hall, which was still lit up. I wanted, if possible, to see what manner of man had performed this nocturnal feat.

Presently I heard rapid footsteps on the hard road trodden every day by the padding feet of the camels, and a figure appeared carrying a lantern and breathing heavily—the climber. It was a man whom I knew, having met him a good many times in Cairo society. There was sweat on his face, which was red with exertion, and his dark eyes shone with a feverish light. He was a handsome Egyptian, known for his daring and many conquests of women.

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When he saw me he stopped, evidently surprised to meet me out there.

"You've been up the Pyramid!" I said.

"Mais oui!"

"Alone?"

"Entirely alone!" he answered in French.

And then he told me that he had made a heavy bet with some friends that he would go to the top of the Pyramid alone in the night. They were waiting for him in the hotel, having seen him start, and now we heard them coming out noisily to congratulate him.

I left him to his success, and decided to incorporate a night ascent of the Great Pyramid in the book I was writing.

The heat in that May month was very great, but I stayed on till the beginning of June in the almost deserted hotel, having the company of my Italian friend, who came over from Cairo.

I remember that time vividly and with keen pleasure. I enjoyed very much writing the Egyptian part of *The Pyramid*, and the short story which was a sort of preparation for it.

More than once while preparing for a long novel I have written a short work to get myself into a suitable frame of mind for its production. I did this when I was meditating over *Bella Donna*, and wrote the brief book which I called *Barbary Sheep*. In both of these books an Englishwoman becomes fascinated by an Oriental lover.

Barbary Sheep, though short and slight, had far more success than I had expected. I made a great deal of money by it and sold it twice for a film.

While I was living with the Knittels in Egypt a rather absurd thing happened in connection with the cinema.

I sold the rights of *The Garden of Allah* for the third time to an American company in Hollywood. They offered me terms to go out to America and assist in the preparations for this new production, in which Miss Marlene Dietrich took part, and which was in colour, but I was too lazy to make the long journey and refused the offer.

The rehearsals began in America, and I knew it.

One afternoon the Knittels and I were at a big reception at the American Legation in Cairo, given by the Minister, the Honourable Judge Bert Fish, who was one of our best friends at that time. He is now American Minister to Portugal. While I was in the midst of the crowd a message was telephoned to me asking me to go at once to the Continental Hotel, as someone from Hollywood wished to speak to me on an urgent matter. As I was particularly interested just then in a conversation I was having with a friend I had met unexpectedly and had not seen for a long time, I sent back word that I could not come then, but could be called at eight o'clock the same evening. And

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at eight o'clock I awaited the summons, wondering who could want me in Hollywood.

Just after eight the call came, and I had a conversation with a representative of the film company which was preparing the new film of *The Garden of Allah*. I can't now remember the precise wording of the message, but this was the gist of it.

Hollywood. Are you Robert Hichens in Egypt?

Myself. Yes. What is it?

Hollywood. Your King is going to marry Mrs. Simpson.

Myself. I beg your pardon!

Hollywood. Your Duke of Windsor is about to marry Mrs. Simpson.

Myself. So I have heard. What has that to do with me?

Hollywood. A great deal. We are producing your *Garden of Allah*.

Myself. I don't see the connection.

Hollywood. There is a great chance for a wonderful scoop.

Myself. I don't understand you.

Hollywood. We wish you to communicate at once with the Duke of Windsor and to persuade him to spend a romantic honeymoon with his American bride in "The Garden of Allah." This would do great things for the success of your film. Get on to him as soon as you possibly can, and make him see what a romantic and thrilling honeymoon he could have in the desert you have described in *The Garden of Allah*. Our company is set upon this.

Myself. But I don't know the Duke! I have never met him!

Hollywood. That doesn't matter! He'll see how it is. He must have heard of *The Garden of Allah*. Use all your power of persuasion. Don't give in. Carry the thing right through, and your film will go off with a bang.

Myself. I'm very sorry. But I can't possibly do what you wish. It would be most impertinent on my part, and the Duke would be outraged by my butting in on his private life.

Hollywood. Now wait a minute! See here—

But at this point I became drastically definite, and finally rang off. It was time, for I was beginning to be invaded by an almost uncontrollable desire to burst out laughing.

While I was in Egypt the young Duchess of Aosta, the wife—now alas the widow—of that splendid and chivalrous soldier the Duke of Aosta, admired by all soldiers, even by those who because of the fortune of war were numbered among his enemies, came out with a lady-in-waiting to spend some time in the country and journey up the Nile. As I have written, I had met H.R.H. in Tunisia, and since then had had the pleasure of being with her again in Switzerland more than once when she paid visits to Valmont, near where I was living.

Hearing that H.R.H. had arrived at Shepheard's Hotel, I left my

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card on her, and the same day received a message from her, asking me to visit her at an hour she fixed, and to dine with her in morning dress early the following evening.

I paid my visit, and H.R.H. said she wanted me to accompany her and her lady-in-waiting, to whom I was introduced, on a moonlight visit to the Sphinx, which neither of them had yet seen. We would motor there in the car of the Italian Minister after dinner.

The expedition took place on a night when the moon was almost at the full. It happened that the Sphinx had no visitors that night except ourselves. We got out of the car at the foot of the Great Pyramid and walked the rest of the way through the silvery night. And we spent a long time by the Sphinx, sitting on stones near the fringe of the hollow in which it reposes, and also made the entire circuit of its bed before going back to the car.

That was a memorable night for its ineffable beauty and calm. The Duchess was in unusually good health and spirits, looking eagerly forward to her trip up the Nile and a long stay at the Cataract Hotel in Assouan.

None of us three had the least suspicion that it was a prelude to great disaster.

After a few days in Cairo the two ladies started for the voyage up the Nile, and for a time all went well. Then the Duchess was stricken by a mysterious illness, which eventually brought her to the very gate of death. I believe it was the most terrible illness from which any human being has ever recovered. I gathered this from the English doctor at Louxor, who was a friend of mine, and who told me that more than once he despaired of saving the precious life which the doctors summoned from Cairo declared could not be saved.

The crisis of this prolonged and awful illness occurred in the Winter Palace Hotel at Louxor while I was staying in the village. The Duchess's mother, the Duchess of Guise, her husband the Duke, and her sister Princess Christopher of Greece, had all been summoned and were in the hotel. I met them all, and saw them again later at the Mena House Hotel on their way home.

A rather curious thing happened on the day when the death of the Duchess was expected by her doctor and her three relatives.

I knew that death was almost certain and felt no hope at all.

In the late afternoon I went out alone into the great Winter Palace garden and sat down under the trees. No one was there but the gardeners. But presently a young Indian, a youth, almost a boy, approached me, and in pidgin English said he wanted to read my hand. I was in no mood for that and told him so.

He said, "I know. You feeling unhappy today."

I agreed. And then he said, "It's because of the lady in there" (pointing towards the hotel).

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I said, "Yes. She is very ill. She is dying."

"No, she not dying! No, not at all. She not going to die."

I asked him what he knew about it, and told him the doctors from Cairo had given her up and gone back to Cairo. He then told me, with absolute conviction, that he had recently read the Duchess's hand, and had seen in it that she was going to live on for many years. And his complete and calm certainty about this impressed me so much that I was suddenly full of hope. I knew that all the Duchess's family who were there, her lady-in-waiting and even myself, had joined together in using our subconscious minds to will death away from her, and began to dare to think that our efforts might be of help.

The Indian youth proved to be right. When even Doctor Dale had given up hope—without, of course, relaxing his efforts to save her—what seemed a miraculous change in the invalid's condition manifested itself, and eventually the Royal lady recovered.

I left Louxor when she was out of danger, but she could not travel for a long time after that, and then only under the care of Doctor Dale in an invalid's carriage. Eventually, however, she arrived safely at her home, the lovely castle of Miramar near Trieste, on the shore of the Adriatic.

Her Royal mother, sister and husband I met again when they were at Mena House, where I lunched with them and had a long talk with the Duke of Aosta, afterwards Viceroy of Ethiopia and Commander-in-Chief of the Italian army which after a long struggle was conquered by the army under British command.

He struck me as a splendid fellow, who had the making in him of a magnificent and inspiring king, had that lot fallen to him. Immensely tall, he was, I thought, strikingly handsome. He was a man of action to the core, but he was also a student, a great reader, and obviously a man of entirely superior intelligence.

Towards the close of lunch, when we had agreed that we lived in terribly troubled times and that there were many dark clouds on the horizon, I said, "Well, at any rate the times we live in are tremendously interesting, sir."

"Just what I think!" he rejoined. "Let that be our consolation."

After the meeting in Egypt I saw the Duke once more, much later on. This was in the chief hotel at Trieste, where I was staying with the Knittels *en route* to Egypt. There was a great gathering there of the foremost Italian warriors to have the honour of meeting His Royal Highness. The Knittels and I by accident came almost into the middle of this after our dinner. When I realized what was going on, and saw the Duke's towering figure in full uniform almost close to me, I discreetly absconded, lest a meeting in public with an Englishman should embarrass him. Things were already very difficult between Italy and my country.

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His imprisonment and premature death saddened me. Owing to the war I did not venture to express my sympathy either to his mother or to his widow, much as I wished to.

From the young Duchess I have received a big photograph signed, in a beautiful frame, which stands in my writing-room at the Swiss home we now live in, backed by the forest above Bad Ragaz. I think of her often with the deepest sympathy. Perhaps her two children are a consolation to her. I believe she is often with her mother, the Duchess of Guise, at their estate in Spanish Morocco.

The Duchess of Guise told me in Egypt that her brother, the Duke of Orleans, was such a marvellous shot that she had stood at a considerable distance from him with an apple between her feet and allowed him to fire at it with an elephant gun. I said:

"You really mean to say you weren't afraid to do that, Ma'am?"

She replied calmly, "Why should I be? I knew he couldn't miss it."

Her mother, the Countess of Paris, was also a first-rate shot, and so is her sister, the Dowager Duchess of Aosta.

When I lived in Egypt certainly one of the most popular people in the country was Prince Mohamed Aly, now the Crown Prince of Egypt, and he was specially popular in the English colony, nearly all of whom he seemed to know. One spring he gave a garden-party in the lovely garden that surrounds his palace at Manial Rhoda on the Nile, and invited hundreds of people to it. In the garden, presiding over it very near to the palace, there is a gigantic ficus tree, whose branches cover such an immense area that all his guests were able to sit under it at the same time without being crowded together. The garden is very large and varied, and contains, separated from the palace, several magnificent rooms furnished and decorated in the old Oriental style, with marvellous ceilings, Oriental carpets, and divans covered with exquisite draperies and embroideries. On the right of the domain, not far from the entrance, the Prince has built a beautiful Mosque.

He is extremely sociable, a remarkably entertaining talker, and full of *bonhomie*. He not only receives many people, but also pays many visits to those whom he likes. A great traveller in former years, he has visited many distant parts of the world, and has written, and printed for private circulation, an account of his travels which he kindly presented to me. He used to breed Arab horses and has written a book full of information about them, which I also have in my library.

As an instance of his kindness of heart I may mention one little episode.

When the Prince goes out in his motor to pay visits he is always accompanied by an equerry, who remains in the motor while the visit is being paid, and who often receives one at the palace if one is calling there. On one occasion when the Knittels and I were being enter-

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tained at the palace, and shown over the Prince's collections of Oriental jewels, china and *bibelots* there, the equerry said something to me about the Knittel children, whom he had seen more than once in our garden.

"They have been here, haven't they?" he said.

"Oh no; never!" I said. "How could they come?"

He made no answer to this, and the subject was dropped. But a very short time afterwards the Prince invited us to the palace with the children, who were delighted to see it and the beautiful garden.

Since then the Prince has been one of the three Regents of Egypt, with Sabry Pasha and General Aziz Izzet Pasha, during the minority of King Farouk. In summer H.R.H. invariably travels in Europe except in wartime. Often he visits Ouchy, where I have several times met him at the Hôtel Beau Rivage. Towards the end of our long stay in Egypt he was seized with severe illness but has entirely recovered from it. An English specialist flew out from London to attend him.

I have only one regret connected with Prince Mohamed Aly, and it is this. H.R.H. began to write very interesting memoirs of his extremely varied, and in many ways unusual life, and allowed me to read them in manuscript and talked to me much about them. They were to be called *The Glory That Was Ours*, and I understood that they would be published. But I have never heard anything more of them. Perhaps they will be issued after the war. I sincerely hope so. The opening chapters connected with the Prince's youth, when his father, Tewfik Pasha, was Khedive of Egypt, give a remarkable description of Oriental life in an age that has passed away, a description from the inside such as very few people could give.

One of our friends in Egypt, who I believe is still living and working there, was Mr. Christopher Scaife, who was attached to the Cairo University, held classes there, was greatly beloved by the students, had much influence over them, and was well known by many outside the University on account of his public lectures and readings from the poets, of course in English. Now and then, however, he gave a lecture in French. I heard an excellent one on the writings of D. H. Lawrence. The poetry readings were given in the hall of the University and attracted crowded audiences of Egyptian students and the English colony. I usually went to them and enjoyed them exceedingly, for Scaife read really well, and always with a complete understanding of the work he was dealing with. He lived in a little house with a garden quite near to us, and I rode with him two or three times. He was a great friend of all the Knittels, drawn to them probably by his love of music. Yes, he loved music but told me he disliked going to concerts. As I happen to be, I suppose, one of the most inveterate concert-goers alive when I get the chance, I could hardly understand this.

Once, however, I was at a concert with him. It was given by a

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professional violinist from Europe who, it seems, is well known and appreciated by very important people. That night, however—perhaps he was slightly "off colour"—this gentleman brought forth from his fiddle some sounds which affected my spinal cord in a way that was not agreeable. I wondered what Scaife, an extremely critical man, was thinking. He said nothing until the last note had died away on the startled air. Then he turned to me and remarked:

"Well, at any rate we can say for him that he does come up to—the scratch!"

Scaife wrote a good deal for the Egyptian *Gazette*, an English daily newspaper published in Cairo. As a reviewer and critic he could be severe, but when he liked anything he was generous in praise. In an English paper called the *Sphinx*, which had some faint resemblance on a small scale to the *World* which I used to write for in London, he wrote a wonderful review of John Knittel's book, *Doctor Ibrahim*. Besides teaching at the University, giving lectures and poetry readings, and writing for the papers, Scaife was a poet. Among other shorter poems he wrote a long narrative poem in ballad form which I both liked and admired very much, and gave a reading of it in our hall-drawing-room one evening, to a tiny audience which included the Inspector-General of the Egyptian Army, Sir Charlton Spinks, and Lady Spinks. I wished to get this into the Christmas number of *Nash's Magazine*, and sent it to the editor, who liked it very much indeed but found it unfortunately too long for the space allotted to poetry.

During part of the time when we were in Egypt the head of the English division of the University was Professor Robert Sencourt, who lived in a little house in Ghiza village close to the Pyramids, where I visited him more than once. He came to our house and discussed modern English literature with me in our garden. He is well known for, among other things, his official Life of George Meredith, an interesting biography which I had bought for my library long before I met him. During his sojourn in Egypt he arranged for a good many lectures to be given at the University by well-known Englishmen. Among them were Sir John Squire, Sir Ronald Storrs, Lord Lytton and the late Laurence Binyon.

I had dined in the company of Mr. Binyon in London at the house of Sir Charles Ollivant, who married my cousin Marga, but had never heard him lecture till he came to Egypt. At his first appearance there was a small tragedy. Just as he was about to begin his lecture all the lights in the hall went out. And though the big audience waited patiently they did not put in an appearance again, and darkness, only lit by, I think, one candle near the lecturer, prevailing, the lecture was cancelled.

As I was going out I passed close to Mr. Binyon and stopped to

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greet and condole with him. He was entirely unperturbed and said, "Better fortune next time!"

I went to two subsequent lectures of his and thought them very original, fine and unusual. They were like the meditations of one thinking deeply alone, unconscious of any audience. Words were spoken, of course, but the effect was merely of thoughts passing through a fine and sensitive mind. I have never heard any other lectures like them.

Lord Lytton was introduced to the audience in a speech by Sir Robert Greg. Sir Ronald Storrs, before becoming famous as a General governing Jerusalem, was Oriental Secretary to the British Agent, was an intimate friend of Lawrence of Arabia, and was known to a great many people as one of the most brilliant young men who had ever come out from England to Egypt. Eventually he was Governor of Cyprus and Governor of Northern Rhodesia. I met him in the Mena House Hotel long before I knew the Knittels and came to live near the Nile. He was a relation of Mr. Harry Cust, whom I knew in London, and had an immense admiration for that greatly gifted man, who might, one thought, have done anything but who left his mark only as the editor for a time of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and as one of the most marvellous conversationalists in society. Mr. Cust wrote one fine short poem, "Not Unto Us," which is included in more than one anthology. He died prematurely during the last great war.

Sir Ronald Storrs is exceptionally brilliant and full of knowledge, as he has shown markedly in his fascinating autobiography. When I was last with him in Egypt he was in very bad health but evidently he has completely recovered. For I met him again at a lunch given by Lady Colefax in London, where he seemed perfectly well. While he was Governor of Jerusalem he knew my brother Arthur, who was Dean of the English Cathedral there under Bishop Blythe and was in the city when the Turks entered it. Besides being the Dean, he had the ecclesiastical title of Canon.

This appellation was misunderstood by a high Turkish officer who called upon my brother and accused him of concealing weapons in the English Cathedral. Although my brother protested that no weapons of any kind were hidden there, the officer not only persisted in his suspicions but actually had some of the pavement in the Cathedral removed in a search for them. Eventually it was somehow conveyed to him that not only was the word "Canon" not connected with a weapon dangerous to human life, but that a word with the same sound belonged as a sort of title to a harmless ecclesiastic. This lifting of suspicion from my brother pleased him so much that, in a joyous mood, he sat down at the Cathedral organ and began to play operatic music upon it.

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My brother Arthur, after living in New Zealand, visiting Australia, and living in and near Smyrna, was for a long time in Palestine, where he started the Scout movement. When the last great war broke out he joined the army as a military chaplain, and served at the Dardanelles, where he was almost perpetually under fire. He has now settled down in a city which he loves, Oxford, near his old college of Magdalen. Evidently he was born with a roving disposition, but he has gone through so much, and has now such delicate health, that I should think his long journeys are over. My father was totally different. Although he went abroad occasionally, visiting France, Switzerland and Italy, and now and then making a sudden dash upon Paris, as a rule England sufficed him. He loved above all things the Lake district of England. Cloudless skies and a prevailing sun were not to his taste. He was fond of grey skies, of humidity, even of rain, and enjoyed walking out when twilight was falling. I believe Egypt would have distressed him. We all loved it and still love the memory of it. Of all rivers I love the Nile best, and I think the climate of Egypt the most attractive climate I know. But I prefer the grand and varied scenery of North Africa to the enticing beauty of Egypt, and the desert as I know it in Egypt does not give me the marvellous feeling of far-away which enfolds me when I travel in the Sahara beyond the oasis of Biskra. Still, Egypt is, I think, a delicious land for living in, and it contains marvels which one never tires of seeing. I have tried to give some description of these in my short book *The Spell of Egypt*, in the expensive edition called *Egypt and its Monuments*, and so have spared my readers any repetitions in these memoirs. I have written about Egypt in several other books, including *An Imaginative Man*, *The Pyramid*, *Bella Donna*, *The First Lady Brendon*, *The Million*, and in various short stories, among them *An Echo in Egypt*. I have also enticed a good many people to the banks of the Nile.

Among these were Mr. and Mrs. Edward Sothern, the famous American actor and actress, whom we met first in Broadway. When Mr. Sothern was touring in America we brought his wife (Julia Marlowe) out to Louxor with us, and she took such an intense liking to Egypt that until this last war drove her away to America she went always for the winter to Egypt, and, when he was free, brought her husband with her. She has spent much time in Louxor, and has also lived often in the beautiful Semiramis Hotel close to the Nile in Cairo. I believe when the war is over, and travel is once more possible, she will be seen again in the beloved country if Fate allows.

My sister Millicent also came out with my cousin, Lady Ollivant, and spent a good while in Louxor and visited us at Ain Shems. The Duke of Bronte, my old friend from Sicily, spent part of a winter in Louxor, and also stayed at Shepheard's Hotel. And our Spanish

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friend, Marquis d'Alcedo, came winter after winter, till he was very old. His last illness took place in Louxor, where John remained with him till he died, and had his body embalmed and arranged for its transportation to Europe. We miss him still. He was part of our life in Egypt.

In many respects an extraordinary man, although he could be simple and natural he had rigid ideas as to what was due to him as a grandee of Spain, and insisted on being treated with what he considered to be proper respect. Rather late in life, and long after we knew him, he became Duke of Santo Mango, and arrived for the winter in Cairo with this new title. He went to Shepheard's Hotel, where he was met on the terrace by the Director, Mr. Baehler, who greeted him with:

"Bon jour, Monsieur le Marquis!"

"Je suis Duc!" returned our friend.

And without another word he marched into the hotel. He had, however, a sense of humour which he had shown before this to John Knittel.

Marquis d'Alcedo, as he then was, with time had become bald. And he often sat out in the Winter Palace garden at Louxor with his head uncovered. One day after luncheon John went out to see him and found him there seated under a tree with a large missive of some kind in his hand and a smile of satisfaction on his face.

"Great news, John!" he said, speaking, as always, in French. "Look what my King has granted to me."

And he handed to John the missive, which stated that King Alfonso had granted to him the rank and status of an honorary "Ministre Plénipotentiaire."

As John, rather amused, was about to offer his congratulations, a bird, ignorant of what had happened, performed a little action which alighted upon the new Minister's bald head. Instead of being exasperated by this unexpected tribute, Monsieur d'Alcedo exclaimed:

"Ha! That's as much as the birds think of my new honour!" And he joined John in a burst of laughter.

One Christmas when we were going to have a fancy-dress dinner—mainly for young people—John suggested inviting Monsieur d'Alcedo to come to it. I thought it might bore him, but John believed he would be flattered if we invited him, so the invitation was sent. He accepted it with apparent delight, only saying that he hoped he would not be a "trouble fête," and he entered into the absurdities of the evening with such a good grace that at dessert he merrily pulled crackers with the children, and even adorned his bald head with a paper cap.

I believe that in spite of his passion for aristocratic society, and his insistence on severe etiquette when he was in it, the simplicity of our

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house and our lives really attracted him, and appealed to something hidden deep down in him. With us he dropped his preoccupation about his social importance and showed himself quite at his best.

He was John's special friend, but I found in Egypt someone who with the years became a dear friend of mine, and who, in spite of those two curses, politics and war, is still, though just now at a distance, a true friend to me.

This is an Italian, Marchese Uberto Strozzi. I met him first long ago when he came to stay in Louxor, accompanied by a very charming French lady whom he had known for many years and who happened to be in Egypt at the same time as himself. We were in the same hotel. He had an introduction to me, and we struck up a friendship which has never faltered.

Although full of life and quick intelligence, Uberto Strozzi is delicate and has to live carefully. Until this war broke out he had, besides several homes in Italy, including a palace in the Piazza del Duomo in Florence, a delicious little flat looking on to the harbour for yachts in Nice. In this flat he furnished a room for me, and several times I went there to stay with him. Although so delicate he is a first-rate swimmer, an intrepid rock-climber, a good and daring horseman and a dashing chauffeur enamoured of speed. He speaks English and French perfectly and is a delightful companion. Winter after winter he came out to Egypt, staying sometimes at Shepheard's Hotel, often at Louxor, where one year he rented the villa which I described, before he had it, in my book *Bella Donna* as the home of Nigel and Mrs. Armine. Sometimes we rode together, and more than once we assisted at the brilliant fêtes organized by Prince Ismail Daoud, who during the season used to come up the Nile in a wonderful dahabeeyah, bringing with him musicians and dancers, horses, and even one season a white camel or two. Those were the great days of Louxor, when for two or three months the hotels were crowded with people from Europe, among whom was prominent the Countess Salverte. One year the great German author, Herr Thomas Mann, came with his wife, and we arranged a fête for them on the Nile in an illuminated boat with musicians on a night of full moon.

Many well-known people visited Louxor in those days. Madame Melba came, and Sir Charles Mendel from the British Embassy in Paris with his wife, Lady Mendel, whom I had met before her marriage as Miss Elsie de Wolfe, and whose beautiful home at Versailles is known to so many English people. Queen Marie of Roumania came with her daughter on a private steamer. The King and Queen of the Belgians arrived on the Royal steamboat King Fouad kept on the Nile. One year the King and Queen of Italy came. People turned up from all parts of the world. I met once more Mr. Somerset Maugham, passing through with a friend on one of his great journeys.

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Mrs. Harold Nicolson—known to many readers as Miss Vita Sackville-West, poet and novelist—arrived on her way to Persia to join her husband, bringing with her memories of my friend, Lady Sackville, her mother. For a short time Louxor, though only a big village, seemed strangely central. At the donkey races ex-King Alfonso of Spain might be seen cheering on donkey-riders eager for prizes. Mirza, the Indian soothsayer and prophet, had his notebook so full of appointments with celebrities that he had to refuse many would-be customers. He read Mr. Bernard Shaw's hand and obtained a certificate from him. He told me, "Mr. Shaw very great man. He my best friend. He believe everything I say to him and *he know what he think.*" This assertion, especially the last five words of it, found credit with me. For a great many years I had realized that Mr. Shaw "know what he think," and also occasionally allows others to know it too. Long ago he knew what he thought when he wrote an article gently ridiculing me for my enthusiasm about the production of Wagner's opera *Tristan* at Covent Garden, with Jean de Reszke and Albani in the principal parts. There was something in it about the smile on Sir Augustus Harris's face which I have never forgotten.

Mirza was a great success at Louxor in those days, and so was the Galli-Galli man with his disappearing or beheaded chickens, whom I saw one night showing his clever tricks to Mr. Rudyard Kipling and a group of friends on the terrace of the Winter Palace Hotel. So was the snake-charmer, who was eventually killed by the bite of a cobra.

Late one season in Louxor I received an unexpected telegram from the Duchess of Sermoneta, to tell me she was arriving on a certain date from Abyssinia with a friend, and asking me to retain rooms for them. They would arrive from Assouan by an evening train.

I engaged the rooms and went to the station to meet them. Directly I saw the Duchess in a travelling costume stepping down from the train I realized that she had made a great journey, and probably in what we English call "the wilds." She was burnt brown by the sun, was amazingly thin, and had, I thought, a look of the far-away, the remote, in her brilliant dark eyes.

She and her friend stayed in Louxor only one night, and we dined together and I heard the story of their adventures in Abyssinia; a story of great hardship, of perils escaped, of difficulties surmounted, of pride in overcoming, and of satisfaction in at last sitting down in comfort to a first-rate dinner in an hôtel de luxe.

"I think we have earned it," the Duchess said. "There were times when I hardly thought I could 'stick it,' as you say in England, but here I am, very thankful to know I am so hardy. Abyssinia is a marvellous country. We traversed it from end to end, very often on foot. Now for a little bit of the armchair life!"

She told me that evening that one of the most horrid experiences

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she had was when a swarm of bees took a sudden fancy to her and seemed anxious to sting her to death.

The next time I saw her was in Paris when we were both staying there in the winter.

During the six years when I had a home in Egypt I paid many visits to Louxor, and spent many weeks at Mena House on the further side of Cairo. The Great Pyramid called to me; the upper Nile drew me. I visited, too, the Fayoum on camel-back from the foot of the Sphinx, and camped out there by the great lake that is haunted by swarms of wild duck. Now and then I would journey to Assouan, but I could never make a long stay there, as the great dryness of the climate so far south affected my throat too much. Twice I flew from Louxor to Cairo in an aeroplane. The second time we were caught in a sandstorm and had to make a forced landing in the desert, and remain there for some hours till the storm abated sufficiently for us to reach Assiut and continue our journey to Cairo by train.

Life in Egypt was full of variety, and when each year the coming of the great heat drove us away to Europe I, for one, always left with regret. And when with the turn of the year the time came to leave Europe again and set sail for Alexandria I looked forward to another seven months of the sun.

And yet finally, rovers as we were, we decided to give up the little property of Dar Ain Shems, and retransport all the furniture, pictures, chandeliers and books which we had gradually acquired, across the Mediterranean to Europe, and to seek a home of some sort there.

How and why did we come to that decision?

I don't think we seriously considered leaving Egypt until we had discovered another possible home in Europe. John said one day that he wouldn't go on living at Ain Shems unless he was allowed to rebuild the house. There was a question of buying the property outright and rebuilding, or of asking Aziz el Masri to allow us to rebuild and to lower the rent in consequence. But as he asked a prohibitive price for the property, and refused to lower the rent whatever we spent on the place, we decided eventually to give up Ain Shems.

We were all devoted to Egypt and our Egyptian life. Nevertheless there were drawbacks to it.

One of these was the fear of two men who lived, and who wanted to go on living, mainly by their pens.

There is, I think, no doubt that a prolonged sojourn in such a climate as prevails in Egypt produces in many Europeans gradually a prevailing tendency towards laziness. Many people in Egypt become what the French call "mou," and the English "flabby" or "slack."

Nearly always the sun shines, nearly, though not quite, always the weather invites you to come out of doors. John was aware of this and so was I, though both of us managed to get through a good deal

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of work in Egypt. I often worked after sunset when darkness was falling. John managed more often than I did to work during the afternoon before teatime. This for me is the worst time in the day for concentrated toil. But I think both of us after some years began to be conscious that our fibres were loosening, that perhaps we were fading a little, that perhaps the allurement of *dolce far niente* was beginning to steal about us.

Then John was suddenly seized by a dangerous illness and for several days hung between life and death. Recovery was slow. That may have helped towards our decision. Possibly, too, the fact that we are both rather restless people made us think a move would be interesting and desirable. I cannot think we were tired of Egypt. But still—

Then there were the children growing up. Was Egypt the best place for them to complete their education in?

The answer to this question could hardly be "yes."

Both the girls had by this time become ardent pianists, and both had played with success in public. They had a painstaking master—but were there not wonderful masters in Europe? Thoughts of Germany, the Germany of that time, haunted their minds, though they knew nothing of Germany and did not speak German albeit they were fluent in French.

The call of Europe became strong. And at last the decision was made. We would give up Ain Shems.

As John said, we could always come back to the bungalow in the garden at Louxor in winter if the lure of Egypt became too strong. He was now better known as a writer. Perhaps Egypt was too out of the way for a man with literary ambitions. Didn't I think so?

And then the trains! Hadn't we had enough of the trains on their way to Marg?

Many things, gathering together, drove us towards our decision. Our landlord was given notice. A man famed all over Egypt as a packer was engaged to transfer our "effects" to Europe. The Egyptian phase was ended. Dar Ain Shems was given up for ever. But I love the thought of it still.

XXVIII

ONCE more we were without a fixed home. When we got back to Europe I left the Knittels and visited England. I went there annually till the Second Great War broke out. I wished to see my sister and

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brother, who both lived in the country. My sister, now a widow and alone, as my niece, her daughter, had married Victor Coverley Price, who was in the diplomatic service, and her only son was in Persia, had a house at Hythe looking over the marshes to the sea. My brother was at that time living at Tunbridge Wells and was in such delicate health that he could do little work, though he was naturally a wanderer and a man full of energy.

In London I saw my agent and friend, Mr. Alick Watt, and we talked over business, and I never failed to pay more than one visit to one of my oldest and best friends, Mrs. John Bromley, known to a great many people as "Teresina," a remarkable woman with a great gift of what seemed to be second sight.

All my visits to England were made by aeroplane, and I returned to Switzerland in the same way. I much prefer flying to travelling by train, and though I am a bad sailor am never uncomfortable in the air. On the contrary, as the machine goes up my spirits go up with it, whereas in the train I quickly get bored.

As I generally went to England in the month of August I had no social engagements. This did not trouble me, for I have ceased to be the man who liked every night to be filled with gaieties. One's essential character may not change very much as the years pass away, but one's tastes often do. It is a very long time since I travelled to London in time for "the Season."

My visit to England over, I settled down for a time in the Dolder Grand Hotel on the hill above Zürich close to the golf-course. Backed by the forest, it is a pleasant place to stay in during the summer and for several years I frequented it. My liking for the city of Zürich, which had been born long before, increased steadily, and now I spend a great deal of my time there. Whether, when at last the war is over, if I am still alive, I shall go travelling again I don't know. My last experience of travel was so complicated, in some respects so disagreeable, and ended so almost tragically, that I can hardly imagine a journey in an atmosphere of peace and lit up by bright anticipation. But that experience lay ahead of me, hidden in the womb of the future, and I had yet to make acquaintance with the sharpest edge of life's irony, like thousands of my countrymen and women, including no less a personage than the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Zürich has for me many attractions. It is a city but not a great city. One quickly feels that one knows and understands it and is at home in it. Lying along the shore of a great lake, a fine river, the Limmat, flows through it. It is watered, too, by canals. Beyond the lake on a clear day one can see a glorious panorama of mountains whose summits are covered with snow. Grouped about it are not too high hills clothed in forests. It is not a sad or a sinister city but a cheery town.

There is a fine opera-house, where one can hear during about nine

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months of the year excellent opera and operetta. There is the Schauspielhaus for drama and comedy. And there are two concert-halls, one very large, one smaller, where during the greater part of the twelve months fine concerts are given every week. There are two good permanent orchestras in the town. And most of the famous pianists, violinists, and many good singers come to Zürich from time to time. Lecturers come too, including distinguished Frenchmen. And attached to the Polytechnic and the University are brilliant professors. Close to the Schauspielhaus there is an excellent picture gallery. Cinema houses abound. And of course there are first-rate hotels and innumerable good restaurants. The Swiss don't despise good food. On the contrary!

I have a strong attachment to Zürich and was moved to write more than one book about it.

The first book I wrote is called *Doctor Arzt*. Another and much longer book I began to work on after we left Egypt finally. The name of this is *That Which Is Hidden*.

For this second book I had to obtain a lot of information about the Zürich University, and at first was in difficulties about this. From these difficulties I was extricated by the kindness of a Chinese friend, whose acquaintance I made at the Hôtel Baur au Lac. He was himself a student at the University and his name is Li Shiu Tong. He is now at Harvard University in America.

I consulted Li about my desire to learn more about the University life, and confided to him my intention of writing a novel dealing with students there. Already I had the theme of the book in my head, but could not begin to deal with it until I knew much more about the inner workings of the place. Could he help me to get hold of someone to "put me wise" about this?

He said, "I'll tly!"

And I waited.

A few days later he asked me to come to tea at a restaurant to meet a student who he thought could be of use to me. I went. And there I met a young man with whom later I had strange adventures. His name was Werner Vordtriede. He was of German origin, but had left his native country some years before, and was now perhaps the most brilliant pupil of the great Swiss University, and the librarian and helper of the noted Professor Fehr, whose book upon English literature has become a classic.

I was struck at once by Werner Vordtriede's exceptional intelligence and swiftness of mind, and inquired of him whether he was inclined to get me all the information I needed—of course as a matter of business. He promised that he would, and a bargain was struck between us. But for him I should never have been able to write *That Which Is Hidden*.

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As a rule, when I write a book I invent my characters, basing them, of course, on such knowledge as I have acquired of human nature, and upon my experience of life. But in this book of Zürich I drew two or three portraits directly from the life.

My theme required a minute study of a Chinese character. I asked Li Shiu Tong whether I might try to draw him, and he gave me permission to do this.

He exists in my book. Anyone who knew him could recognize him there, with his curious unusual intuition, his apparently quite natural faculty of penetrating below the surface of things, his love of small birds and animals, his knowledge of the Far East, his innate delicacy when dealing with others, so characteristically Chinese, his power of reserve, and his persistence when walking in a route he has traced out for himself. At the end of the book there is a scene in which, I think, almost any European would have blurted out what he had known and what he had done to produce the drama.

I made my Chinese keep his secret and leave things in the air. Later I said to Li,

"Would you have done that?"

"Of course!" he said. "It is velly Chinese."

Li read the book when it was finished, and was quite satisfied with my presentation of him in circumstances devised entirely by me, but in which he acted as he acknowledged that he would have acted had Fate cast him as the chief performer in so tragic a drama. In the opening of the book, which is at Nice on the French Riviera, I have described a tomb which Li actually erected to the memory of a friend of his long since dead, and which can be seen by anyone who visits the great cemetery of La Cocarde on the hill above Nice.

The help which Werner Vordtriede gave me was excellent, and enabled me to supply an accurate representation of University life, which was acknowledged by the reviewer of the *Neue Zurcher Zeitung* when the book came out. I really enjoyed the writing of this long work, during which my acquaintance with Werner Vordtriede was cemented into a lasting friendship. He introduced me to his valiant and steadfast sister, Fränze, whom I hope to see again when the war is over, and I also made acquaintance with his mother when she succeeded in getting into Switzerland in the midst of the war.

Werner is now living in America and will before long become an American citizen. He is having a successful career as an instructor in well-known Universities and also speaks on the radio. But since he got away to America he and I have had an adventure which I will describe briefly in a subsequent chapter.

Another change in my life with the Knittels came about before that.

After we arrived in Europe we presently decided to pay a visit to Bayreuth, where our friend, Herr Wilhelm Furtwängler, was an-

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nounced to conduct the operatic festival there of that year. No thought of war was in our minds at that time, whatever the politicians were expecting. Herr Hitler was already in power in Germany. Herr Goering, Herr Doktor Goebbels, Herr Hess, Count von Papen, Herr Streicher, Herr Rosenberg and others were already notorious or famous. But some of us, blessed innocents, did not realize what was coming. We loved music. The Knittels had never been to Bayreuth. Herr Furtwängler would be conducting. Let us go! We took tickets and went.

The Ring, of course, was down for production, with *Parsifal*, and we bought places also for *Lohengrin*, which was to be the opening opera.

I had twice been to Bayreuth already, but a long time ago, when Madame Cosima Wagner was ruling there after the death of her great husband. I had heard *Lohengrin* many times, and wished that, instead of it, the programme had included *Meistersinger* or *The Flying Dutchman*. *Lohengrin* again did not specially attract me.

I thanked Heaven later that I had not missed it.

We had nice simple lodgings in a quiet part of Bayreuth close to a house which presently received the visit of Marshal Goering and his wife. Herr Hitler stayed at the famous Wagner house with Frau Siegfried Wagner and her family. When we arrived the town was already full of Storm Troops.

We found we were to be honoured by having places kept for us at Herr Furtwängler's big table in the restaurant near the opera-house, which was next to the table of the Wagner family. And there we met Frau Furtwängler, his mother, by whom I sat at meals, his brother and his sister-in-law, his clever and charming secretary, the great Wagnerian soprano, Frida Leider, and her husband, and other interesting people. His good-looking Danish wife, whom I already knew well, turned up later and joined us. We were a big party at luncheon, tea and supper when the day's work and enjoyment were over.

Owing to John Knittel's intimate friendship with Herr Furtwängler we had certain privileges. The first was this.

There was to be a full orchestral and dress rehearsal of *Lohengrin* and we were told we could come to it if we liked.

We did like and went to it, and during it I had the supreme operatic experience of my life.

A great many years before this I had heard at the Munich opera-house, under Mottl, a performance of Wagner's *Meistersinger* which had stood out in my memory as the finest rendering musically, dramatically and scenically of an opera I had ever been present at. The performance of *Lohengrin* at Bayreuth surpassed even that. Never before had I heard in opera such male choruses, so heroically masculine, so vivid, so full of thrilling energy as those. All the rôles were admirably filled, but what struck me most as new and unusual was the manage-

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ment of the swan, and what really almost overwhelmed me was the scene of the wedding procession. Never before had I seen on the stage anything so entrancingly beautiful as that was, and the way in which it was combined with the music, and gradually rose in a long slow crescendo of majesty to an overpowering climax, left one gasping. There are moments when, for some reason which I cannot define, beauty can become almost unbearable. One seems to feel it, to respond to it, too much. The emotion passes from sheer enchantment into a region almost of terror.

"Can this be? Then what of the rest of life?"

We all came out into the daylight after this scene was over shaken, speechless and almost ashamed.

Illusion could go no further. The man who conceived and produced it is a genius.

When I have seen *Lohengrin* the swan has generally, nearly always in fact, been a failure. It has seemed to be on the verge of moulting. Its movements have been jerky. Lohengrin has seemed ill at ease with it.

Not so at Bayreuth. The bird there was a beautiful silver marvel, serene and softly gliding over the water. And when Lohengrin addressed it, after stepping on land, it turned gently towards him in a listening attitude. One felt its magical response to him and to all he was singing.

As to the playing of the orchestra under Furtwängler it seemed to me perfect.

I heard *Lohengrin* twice and was equally moved by it and enchanted each time.

On the morning of the day following the rehearsal of *Lohengrin*, when I walked to the end of the road in which our lodgings were, I saw in front of the garden gate of a rather important looking house a guard of S.S. men, and a few people apparently waiting for something. As I was wondering what this meant a motor-car with a man in uniform at the wheel came up and stopped, and a quantity of luggage was quickly taken out and placed on the ground. It was very smart luggage and apparently almost new. A man-servant came from the house and the luggage was carried in through the garden.

Owing to the presence of the guard of stalwart, very tall and grim-looking young men, I guessed that a personage was expected, and lingered for a moment, moved by curiosity. Almost directly I heard the hum of another approaching car, the guard presented arms, the gate of the garden was thrown wide open, and a very smart racing car came swiftly up and passed just in front of me. Marshal Goering was the chauffeur, and a lady sat beside him. For the first time I saw this now celebrated individual. He looked exactly like his photographs: rosy, cheerful, determined, the famous deceptive smile which has

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fascinated Germany well in evidence, a hard steady expression in his eyes which glanced in my direction for an instant. Then the car glided through the gateway and the guards stood at ease again.

When we were starting for Bayreuth Frances and John had asked me whether we should need evening dress there. I said we should not. On my previous visits to Bayreuth I had seen no one wearing evening clothes. But times had changed, and I was astonished at the opening performance of the festival to see lots of women in evening dresses, opera-cloaks and jewels, accompanied by men in evening coats with tails, black trousers, white waistcoats and ties and high collars. And among them was no other than Herr Hitler, whom I now saw for the first time.

He drove up in a car with Frau Siegfried Wagner, and when he entered her box behind where we were sitting I noted that he was as smart as anyone.

Doctor Goebbels, Count von Papen, Herr Hess and the rest of the magnates, with the exception of one, were in evening clothes. The exception was Marshal Goering, who appeared in a wonderful uniform, white on the opening day.

Naturally I looked at Herr Hitler with a great deal of interest. I cannot say that, though he is a phenomenon who will go down in history, I suppose, as one of the most extraordinary beings ever created, his appearance is either striking, commanding, or in any way arresting.

While we were in Bayreuth I heard someone, speaking of him, say, "He looks like a village barber on his wedding day."

And I was rather inclined to agree with the speaker.

He sat in the front of the box on the right hand of Frau Wagner, not talking, with a grave, not self-conscious expression on his face, his lips closed tightly under the tiny moustache, waiting for the curtain to go up.

So that was the ruler of Germany, the great, the powerful, the tremendously ambitious Germany!

The ex-Kaiser, whom I had seen several times, certainly "looked the part" much better than this silent grave man in evening dress.

In a box close by sat Doctor Goebbels, lively, talkative, apparently gay, and much younger looking than I had expected. Marshal Goering was, of course, also in a box.

Count von Papen was in the stalls, and was, I thought, by far the smartest looking man in the vast audience. On two or three occasions I was close to him, and noticed specially his frightening eyes. Who could trust a man with such eyes? A typical clever, cold, cynical, restless diplomat, aristocratic and absolutely unscrupulous. That was the impression Count von Papen made upon me. He did, most emphatically, look the part he was playing, looked "born for it" as

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the actors say. No deceptive smile played round his lips. He didn't take the trouble that Marshal Goering is so ready to take for the satisfaction of a humbugged nation.

These men I saw day by day, and of course knew none of them. Nor did I know, or even suspect, the development to which they were tending, for the terror, the distraction, the ruin of a world.

We were all at Bayreuth, at any rate supposedly, for music.

There is a balcony jutting out from a private room in the Bayreuth opera-house, and during the long pauses between the acts of the operas beneath this balcony, watched and controlled by guards in uniform, a great crowd perpetually waited, gazing up at it, yearning to see the Führer and occasionally calling and calling for him. Now and then he graciously responded to the crowd's adoration. Then all arms were lifted and hands were stretched imploringly towards him as if demanding a benediction. And he looked down from the balcony and gave the Nazi salute.

No mistake about it! These were worshipping crowds.

Once when I stood there, watching but not adoring, an elderly American lady close to me, who carried a rather large bag, suddenly opened it. Instantly two guards were upon her, suspecting no doubt a revolver. The poor lady was painfully embarrassed. She was only seeking her handkerchief. Somehow the matter was explained, the bag was inspected and found harmless, and the lady, the cynosure of all German eyes, was left to recover her lost equanimity.

Although at the opening performance Herr Hitler wore evening dress, at all subsequent performances he was very simply dressed in uniform with dark trousers. During the tea interval he walked between the two lines of guards to the restaurant, and had tea in the same huge room as all of us. I did not see him at supper-time.

Each day, when the long operas were over, we had supper with Herr Furtwängler at his table, and watched the chief performers come in. All of them were greeted with prolonged applause, and Herr Furtwängler received an ovation. Invariably I sat beside Frau Furtwängler *mère*, and we became almost intimate friends. She spoke English, was kind and cordial, and enjoyed the success of her famous son. At that time there seemed to be no enmity between Germans and English.

Looking day after day at Herr Hitler sitting in his box, attentively listening to the music of Wagner with a grave face, watching his simple manner when from the balcony of the opera-house he gave the Nazi salute to the crowd of worshippers who stretched out their arms to him from below as if imploring his blessing, seeing him walking to his meal in the restaurant between the two lines of guards, apparently a quite ordinary man who, for some mysterious reason, made an inexplicably vast impression upon myriads of Germans, one did not,

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could not, suspect at that time that here was a man with the power, and the intention, presently to throw almost the whole of the world into the cauldron of war, and to cause the death of millions of his own people and the fellow-men of other nations. He looked like a quiet, serious bourgeois, not glorying, like a Mussolini, in the power which he already possessed and which was to be so vastly extended.

Every day Marshal Goering appeared in a different uniform. Herr Hitler did not take the trouble to emulate him.

But his was not the gaudy shadow of power, his was the stern hidden reality of power.

When the festival was over we came away from Bayreuth satisfied with our rich feast of music, and mercifully unaware of the blackness approaching.

XXIX

The Knittels and I parted company for a time after the festival at Bayreuth. They went away to join the children and I travelled back to the Dolder Hotel to do some writing and to play golf. Now we had no settled home we often separated. This indeed was nearly always the case while we had the house at Ain Shems. The Knittels went several times to Wildbad Kreuth and to England. Twice I visited them at Bad Kreuth. I still had a fondness for London and had a good many acquaintances and some friends there, so I dropped in now and then and put up at a hotel. But usually I was abroad.

We had a motor, a Buick. John and I bought it together between us, sharing the price. We now had no chauffeur. John often drove the car, but Frances also drove it. I had learnt to drive when I first possessed a car but had long ago given up driving. I used to be quite a good coachman, but was never an accomplished chauffeur.

It happened once when I was up at the Dolder, and the children were in the mountains with friends, that the Knittels went to stay for a few days at Bad Ragaz in the Grisons.

This is a well-known cure place in Switzerland, no longer specially fashionable, but with healing waters which still attract a good many people. It lies in the midst of beautiful scenery between Zürich and Chur, not very far from Davos and St. Moritz, surrounded by high mountains, but at the foot of them in a fertile valley. Near it, at the base of a gentle hill, backed by forests and towering crags, which seem in places almost to pierce the sky with their pointed summits, is a

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picturesque village called Maienfeld, famous in Switzerland for its vineyards and the strong red wine that is made from them.

In a fortunate summer for us, as we realized later, Frances Knittel and John decided on this visit to Ragaz and took our Buick with them. While they were there they asked me to pay them a visit. I accepted and went to Ragaz.

The weather was brilliantly fine and I admired the scenery. Not far away was the little kingdom of Liechtenstein, ruled over by the Prince of that name, and on the day of my arrival John proposed that we should motor there and have a look at it.

Frances and I, of course, supposed he intended to drive the car as usual, but unexpectedly he said, "I want to see all the country round here properly. I think I'll engage someone to drive us. Then I needn't bother about the road and can thoroughly enjoy the scenery."

This was a new departure for John. But why not? He went off to find a chauffeur recommended by Herr Kienberger, the Director, whom we had known in Egypt, found him, and after lunch we set out on our expedition.

Our way lay through Maienfeld village and up the hill beyond it, skirting the vineyards.

It was a radiant summer day, and the fine country looked its best.

A few minutes after leaving the picturesque village of peasants and vine-growers we came to a beautiful common. Upon it, dotted about on green lawns, which looked like the lawns of a park, were a great many mighty oaks and some walnut trees, among which sheep were browsing.

"What a delicious common!" one of us said.

(I remember thinking of Arcady.)

John was gazing out to the right.

"Why, there's a house in there!" he said, looking at a green gate which shut in a property.

And he remarked that this house must be in a delicious situation, standing, as it did, on a gentle hill, overlooking a view of the valley and Ragaz, with this lovely common just outside its gate and garden wall, and the forest behind it, backed by the towering crags. It stood quite alone, too. Below it the vineyards flowed down to the valley. Within easy reach was the village.

"I shouldn't mind having a look at that house," he added casually.

We spent a pleasant afternoon at Vaduz. Nothing more was said about the house on the hill above Maienfeld. But when, on our return journey, we were again nearing the green gate that gave on to the common John said to me, "Would you mind if we stopped for a few minutes and asked whether we could have a look at the house in there?"

"No, let us stop!" I answered.

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We all got out. The garden gate was locked, but on one side of it was a bell, which John rang several times. We heard the bark of a dog somewhere in the distance, then steps upon pebbles, a small door on the right of the gate was opened and a middle-aged man showed himself. A few words from John and we were let in.

John asked if the house was occupied and was informed that it stood empty at the moment.

"Could we see over it?" was the next question.

The caretaker replied that he couldn't let us see it without the owner's consent.

John then asked who was the owner and where he lived, got through to him by telephone—he was let in to the house so far—and received permission to examine the house, which had been bought as a speculation and which was to be let or sold.

Beyond the gate we found a drive lined with fruit trees, and espaliers trained against a high wall separating the property from the common. On our right was rough grass with many more fruit trees, and immediately below it a good-sized vineyard. At the end of the drive was an attractive-looking house, evidently very well built and not ancient, resembling, I thought, a big cottage that must have plenty of room in it. Farther on it seemed as if the forest had encroached into the garden, for there was a grove of big trees within the surrounding walls. Close to the house on the left was a netted sort of yard. In this the guard dog was barking at us.

While I noticed all this, John was talking to the gardener and gathering information. The house was partially furnished, and the owners, a man and his wife, who lived in Zürich, came there now and then from a Saturday to a Monday. It had belonged to a famous doctor who had been a ruling power at Davos, and who had built the house when he retired from practice and had lived in it till his death. He had chosen this particular spot because of the dryness of the soil, the excellence of the climate, the abundance of water and the beauty of the surrounding scenery. The gardener and his wife had been with him for years and now "went with the house" and wished to continue there.

He unlocked the front door and took us into the house, and we went all over it.

Downstairs, beside the kitchen and offices, there were three sitting-rooms opening into each other and looking on a garden that sloped downwards and was in a rough state. One of the sitting-rooms was small but compact. The middle room was large, and the room beyond it smaller but a fair size. There were many windows. We liked very much the shape of them and the look of the rooms. As we stood in the large middle one we all thought what a charming living-room could be made of it.

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We glanced out of the windows. There was a terrace below them. At the end of the largest room was a door opening on to a paved loggia.

"One could have meals out here!" said John meditatively.

We went upstairs to the first floor. Here there were in all seven rooms and a toilet. There was also a sort of small hall, or spacious landing, on which the rooms opened. The view from the windows attracted us. Above, a narrow stairway, shut in by a door, led to a large upper landing containing a quantity of space for luggage and a couple of bedrooms for servants.

"I like this house," said John.

I remarked that it was wonderfully well built, and compared it with our home at Ain Shems, which was built of mud bricks and had ugly doors that didn't fit properly into their frames. What a difference here! What excellent strong handsome doors!

John seemed pleased at my comparison! Frances, too, liked the house.

"Now let's have another look at the garden!"

Accompanied by the gardener we went all over the property. There was a lovely section of wood just outside the front door.

"We are in the forest here!" someone said.

We passed through the wood and came out into a long strip of grass-covered land with cherry trees dotted about on it. This was closed in from the surrounding country by a tall wire fence.

We returned and went down to the piece of land below the terrace, and all agreed that a very charming garden could be laid out there. We stood still and gazed at the view, at Ragaz lying in its valley, at the towering peaks all around, at the forests, at the far-away green country towards Chur. The summer silence was deep, broken now and then by the sound of cow bells.

"One could work well here," said someone.

Either John or I said it.

He got the address of the owner in Zürich and we drove back to dine in Ragaz.

In the evening during dinner we talked about what we had seen. It was obvious to me that John was very much attracted to the house and the property. But we all agreed that the house, though very well built and charming, was too small for six people and servants. We should be too crowded together in it when we were all assembled there, as we should probably be in the holidays.

(It had been arranged by this time that the two girls were to continue their education in Germany, and there was some idea of Robert's staying there too for a time, to learn German before going to Oxford.)

As for me, John asked me more than once:

"Do you think you would like settling down in Graubünden *if*—?"

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He paused and added:

"You would be very near to Zürich, which you seem to like so much, and you could often go there for a visit."

I could see that already he was beginning to long for that little property. Although both he and I are rather restless people he has a great love of home and hates to be "in the air." And though I can work very well in hotels, he much prefers to have his own special room with many books and documents at hand. Frances, too, hates hotels and hotel life.

"The house is small," he said. "But we could build on."

The eventual result of that drive with a hired chauffeur at the wheel was that, after a good deal of negotiation, John bought the Maienfeld property outright, and we are now domiciled in Graubünden, and have lived there, when at home, since 1938, and feel we have roots in the place. But Römersteig, as it is now called, has been transformed since John acquired it. A garden has been laid out in front of the house, with a croquet-lawn, many flower-beds, and a rose-covered wall shutting the property in at the bottom. Among the flowers is a trickling stream feeding a rock-fringed pool. The land has been terraced and many trees planted. There is a big kitchen garden near the vineyard. In the wood is another larger pool stocked with trout, and a tall fountain plays in its centre and makes a cool music that murmurs to summer. But the greatest change made has been the building of a second house, just across the drive, three or four steps from the main dwelling.

This was planned entirely by the Knittels, with some slight assistance from a working architect, and seems to be considered by our friends and acquaintances an outstanding success.

On the ground floor is a big drawing-room opening into what I call the music-room. Part of this latter is raised from the level of the drawing-room by a couple of steps, and there stand two grand pianos, one a Blüthner and the other a Steinway. From this section a staircase, shut in by a door, leads to a very large library, which is by far the most beautiful chamber in the house. The interior is surrounded on all four sides by a balcony, and has a wonderful ceiling of painted wood, and many windows set in painted frames, opening on to the common and on to the surrounding trees of the garden. This balcony is supported by four painted pillars, and the greater part of the floor space is covered by an immense ancient carpet from Persia, which John bought in Egypt. The walls of this room, both below and above in the balcony, are lined with books interspersed with pictures, and the prevailing colours are red, green and gold. The effect of the green in the ceiling is that the wood looks as if it were bronze.

Out of the balcony opens a delightful bedroom with a big balcony which belongs to the two Knittel girls. Separated from it, but close

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to it, there is a flat for the gardener, his wife and child, with another balcony. There are three bathrooms in the two houses.

Scattered through all the rooms my furniture is mingled with John's in a friendly way, and in like manner our books are ranged side by side. We have a good many pictures. Mrs. Knittel has her sitting-room, John has his and I have mine. I come and go, when in Switzerland, between Römersteig and my little apartment in Zürich. During the greater part of the winter we are away, as we don't care to be snowed up, and in wartime there is a certain amount of difficulty about heating the two houses.

Thus, after much travelling, and sojourns in various furnished houses, in Sussex, Surrey, Worcestershire, Kent, after dwelling near Vevey and close to the desert in Egypt, we settled down in the quiet Swiss country near Ragaz, *dans nos meubles*, and I believe we imagined that Peace would bestow its blessings upon our lives. In this quiet house surely we could accomplish some good work undisturbed.

Robert Knittel was presently entered at Oxford, after studying German in Munich. The two girls were settled in Munich working industriously at their music under the guidance of a first-rate professor, Herr Lampe. John had made a great advance in his writing with his very best book up to date, now famous all over the Continent as *Via Mala*. I had in mind my story of the Zürich University, *That Which Is Hidden*, and meanwhile had completed two books, *Daniel Airlie* and *The Journey Up*. Although I had lost a fortune, the large sum I had gained with *The Paradine Case*, and the fair success of subsequent books, had driven the wolf from my door, and, philosophy coming to my aid, I did not feel afraid of the future.

In our quiet valley, made musical by the sheep bells, we knew not that the Furies were approaching us, were indeed close at our heels.

Often I went to Zürich for a short stay, where I saw much of my Chinese friend, Li Shiu Tong, was initiated into the delicate intricacies of the Chinese character, and heard a good deal of music. Recently I counted the operas I have heard in the Zurich opera-house, and found I had heard nearly forty. I cultivated, too, my friendship with Werner Vordtriede. And now and then I paid a visit to London.

Once when *en route* to London for the Wimbledon fortnight I had an unexpected experience.

I wished to be at Wimbledon for the first match on the opening day, a Monday, and, for some reason that I forget, started not from Zürich but in a plane from Basel. When I reached the Basel aerodrome I found that there was going to be a big meeting of aeroplanes there and the aerodrome was *en fête*. The morning was grey but perfectly calm. There was no rain, no wind. I got into the plane, we started, and I opened a book I had with me and began to read. We were to come down in Paris and remain at the aerodrome there

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for some time before flying on to Croydon. A friend who lived in Paris was coming to meet me. I knew, of course, at what hour we were due in Paris.

After we had been in flight for a considerable time and I was deep in my book I noticed that we were about to come down. I looked at my watch. Surely it was not possible that we had already reached Paris. No; we were not due there for a considerable time. Then why were we coming down?

I looked out of the window, and saw a river, over which we were circling, and a city below us. I stared at the city. It looked very familiar. Why? It looked absurdly like Basel.

We passed over it and came above an aerodrome.

A meeting of aeroplanes was taking place there—as in Basel.

We came to earth, with a slight bump. We taxied a little way and stopped. The door of the cabin was opened and I got out.

It was Basel.

What had happened? Why had we come back to the place from which we had started? I inquired but never found out. Evasive replies were given to me. All I was told was that it was doubtful whether there would be another plane to Paris that day. Therefore I managed to hire a taxicab, drove to the Basel station and eventually caught an express train to Paris, where I arrived very late at night. On the following day I flew on to London, and eventually reached Wimbledon just as Mr. Tilden was walking on to the court to play the first ball of the tournament.

I have made a great many flights, and several times in very bad weather, but have never been involved in an accident, unless the forced landing my plane made in the Egyptian desert near Assiut can be called one. One of the most interesting flights I have enjoyed was made in a Moth, which I hired in Zürich and flew in to Naples. Until we were coming down in an aerodrome near Rome the weather was perfect, and we flew low over the snow-covered summits of the Alps and over the Apennines. I have been involved in five accidents in motor-cars, three of them rather bad ones; and have been in a bad railway accident in the middle of the night in Calabria. But I have escaped without injury. And I hope when the war is over once more to take to the air, if I am still alive.

Our peaceful life was presently interrupted by rumours of probably coming war, and the newspapers were filled with reports of the activities of the man whom I had seen day after day sitting in Frau Wagner's box at Bayreuth apparently absorbed in the music of Wagner. The frantic efforts of Mr. Chamberlain to preserve peace, and his slogan, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again!" were related to us nightly on our radio. Europe seemed to be trying desperately to shelter under his umbrella. The symbol of the olive

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branch was as nothing compared with the symbol of Mr. Chamberlain's umbrella. His flights to Germany were recorded. We heard in Mrs. Knittel's sitting-room, the walls of which were lined with the signed photographs of our friends, the wild cheering of the London crowds which greeted his return to England.

One night I shall never forget, even if I live to be a hundred, which is quite unlikely.

We were all assembled together within sound of the radio. Our Egyptian friend, Doctor Boktor, was with us, having come to Europe for his vacation and to study the hospitals in Germany and in England. All the children, including Robert, then a student at Oxford, were at home. Our faithful Ibrahim in his flowing robes hovered in the background, as always identified with "the family." Our anxiety about the future had been steadily increasing for days. John was especially afflicted, for he is one of the greatest humanitarians I know, and has a horror of violence and war. But we were all in the condition known as "strung up." Mr. Chamberlain had once more returned from Munich and was addressing the House of Commons on the result of his last mission. As no doubt most people remember, in the midst of his speech to a house crammed to the doors, with all the diplomats and the Archbishop of Canterbury in the packed gallery, a piece of paper was handed to him. He stopped in his speech, read it, and then announced that Herr Hitler had agreed to guarantee peace with England for a prolonged period of years.

This was a moment of triumph for the Prime Minister. A burst of cheers followed his words, and it is on record that the Archbishop of Canterbury was seen stamping his feet and beating with both fists on the front of the gallery in which he was sitting.

The effect upon our modest little circle was electrical. Peace, a long peace, was guaranteed. We did not precisely cheer. But we shook hands. There were even embraces. Somebody, I remember, exclaimed, "It's like a fairy story!" John said to the enchanted Ibrahim,

"Ibrahim! Open a bottle of champagne!"

He hurried out to obey, his robe seeming to rustle applause, and we sat down to our dinner in exuberant spirits. And presently, with uplifted glasses, we drank to Peace.

We believed that night in the solemn promise of the man who has never given his word except with the secret intention of breaking it.

The irony of that night! I shall never forget it.

That night, for the first time, I might have been called with truth "a Chamberlainite." Hitherto I had never believed in Mr. Chamberlain. I had hated and mistrusted the policy of appeasement and for years I had felt convinced that the only politician of Britain in whom Britain could safely place her trust was Winston Churchill.

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Events have given me reason. I am justified of my faith in the man who was deliberately excluded from power during the most dangerous years through which my country has ever passed. At last he was summoned to power as the only man capable of expressing the soul of Britain and fortifying it.

Thank God it was not too late.

It has always seemed to me very strange that so many clever and patriotic people had such complete faith in Mr. Chamberlain. I have a letter from my friend, Mrs. Alfred Spender, in which she wrote, "Alfred and I are passionate Chamberlainites"; and most of my intimate friends thought he was the man who could save Britain from war, while I was inclined to think that, though no doubt a clever and well-meaning man, and one excellently qualified to be a Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had no flair for psychology, and would be almost as a babe in the hands of a supreme humbug like Herr Hitler, who I had for some time believed to be determined if possible to conquer, and rule, the world.

But even Lord Rothermere, whose assertions of the absolute need for Britain to have a big air force were unheeded by the blind and deaf politicians, has stated in one of his books that Herr Hitler is "a great gentleman."

Well, now we and the world, including millions of Germans, know exactly what Herr Hitler is—and was.

Very soon after this night of irony, toasted by us in champagne, peace departed from little Römersteig, from Europe and from the world, and after years of misery and destruction I am writing this in the midst of a crescendo of horror.

And yet so far Switzerland has kept out of the fray. Only last night the sirens sounded the alarm. Aeroplanes were passing over Switzerland violating her neutrality, but still the little country enjoys the blessing of what can be called relative peace. Few of us living in it, however, can, I suppose, feel peace in our hearts.

As soon as Britain entered the war I wrote to London, stating that I had lived for many years abroad, giving, of course, my age, and adding that I was ready to go to London at once, and to remain there during the war, if those in authority considered it possible to use my services in any capacity. In reply to this move on my part I received from London a printed paper which I was asked to fill up and to return at once to an address which was given. I immediately filled this up and sent it away by post. I never received any communication in reply. I wrote once more, but I had no answer, and I therefore, no doubt rightly, concluded that men of my age were not considered able to be of any use at all in wartime. I don't concur in this view, but of course I have to give in to it. In consequence, I have never set foot in England since before the outbreak of war.

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Nevertheless I have not always been in Switzerland.

And now I am coming to the strange adventure which, in a former chapter, I alluded to as having been shared by me with my friend Werner Vordtriede, the University student who helped me with my book, *That Which Is Hidden*, and who in the course of doing so became a close friend of mine.

XXX

A LONG time before the war came, Werner Vordtriede told me he knew it was coming.

"Hitler has made up his mind to make war," he said. "Some day, and probably very soon, you will know that."

I tried not to believe him.

He loved Europe, was a thorough European, but he had come to the conclusion before the war that in Europe as it then was, and still more in the Europe that he foresaw, there would be no place for him, and after many talks with him I was inclined to agree about this. He had left Germany when very young, the incentive to that departure being the cloud, like a man's hand, that he already saw in the distance. When I first met him he was finishing the chief part of his education in the Zürich University. But he said,

"If I can manage it I must get away to America and make my career there. I intend, if possible, eventually to take American nationality."

I did not try seriously to dissuade him, though I was sorry at the thought of losing his company, and eventually he succeeded in carrying out the necessary preliminaries and left Europe for Cincinnati, where he had obtained a scholarship at the University, would be able to pass an important examination, and would almost certainly be taken on eventually as a teacher. Before he left we made a trip together to the South of France, went to Nice to see my Italian friend Uberto Strozzi, and stayed for a time in Provence, mainly in Arles, which we both more than liked.

On the Riviera there was an absolute riot of pagan life. People seemed mad for pleasure. And I could not help feeling that it was like a Bacchanalian dance on the edge of an abyss.

Werner's charming sister came to Zürich to see the last of him. While she was with us war seemed on the point of breaking out. And when Werner reached Paris on the way to his ship France was mobilizing. However, he got away, the war scare died down, France

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demobilized, and Europe was left to a short period of what was called peace.

From Cincinnati I received many letters from Werner. He passed his examination with credit, got a post as teacher in the University, was very kindly received, applied for naturalization papers, and was now on the way to become in, I think, about three or four years an American citizen. He wrote that he was fairly happy, but acknowledged that often he longed for Europe. And he was resolved, when the long summer vacation came, to cross the Atlantic and spend it in Europe.

And this is what he did, and this it was that produced all the trouble we were destined to share together.

War seemed to be averted, and perhaps for a considerable time. There seemed to be no reason why he should not pass the summer months in Europe. And one evening at Römersteig I was called to the telephone and heard a familiar voice say,

"It is Werner speaking. I have just arrived in Zürich."

This was welcome news. I travelled to Zürich and met the wanderer.

While we were together, at first in Zürich, we decided to take presently another trip abroad. He had to go to stay for a time in the house of an intimate friend, a student at the University, who lived in Switzerland, at the very edge of Germany. It was decided that meanwhile I should pay one of my usual visits to Uberto Strozzi in Nice, and that Werner should eventually join me there.

We parted. I went to Nice to see Uberto Strozzi, and presently settled in the Hôtel d'Angleterre in readiness to meet Werner.

He arrived late one evening in the best of spirits, and we had a gay dinner on the terrace of the Hôtel Negresco.

After spending some delightful days in and near Nice we decided to pay another, perhaps longer visit to Provence, with which we were both more or less in love, then to go to Geneva to see the Spanish pictures which were being exhibited there, and finally to make a tour through Switzerland, visiting a number of places and perhaps walking through the Tessin.

Werner had already booked his passage back to America in a liner which was due to sail from England in the month of September. On the way to Avignon, Arles, etc., we decided to spend a few days in Marseilles, the turbulence of which had some fascination for us both.

In Marseilles we stayed at the Hôtel Splendide, and on the second night after our arrival we drove to the Restaurant, La Réserve, which is outside of the city on a height overlooking the Mediterranean, to dine in the open air on the terrace.

It was a lovely evening, warm and still, and we were both of us in a particularly happy mood.

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While eating an excellent dinner we often gazed out over the sea, and presently we saw a fairly large steamer coming along from the harbour and setting her course towards Northern Africa.

"That ship must be bound for Tunis, I think," I said. "Whenever I see a ship going that way I wish I were on board of her."

"What a pity we aren't!" said Werner, his eyes always fixed on the vessel. "I envy you having paid so many visits to Africa. I wonder whether I shall ever be able to go there?"

While he spoke the thought came to me, "Why shouldn't we go there instead of returning at once to Switzerland by way of Provence?" We had a few weeks of holiday time to fill up. There was nothing to prevent us from spending them in Tunisia. The heat there would certainly be great, but I had found by long experience that I could stand heat quite as well as most Europeans, and better than a good many.

The steamer we both watched moving onwards was presently lost in the shadows of night. Then I came to an exciting decision.

"Shall we go for a short trip to Tunisia?" I said.

"D'you mean that?" said Werner.

"Yes. If you're not afraid of the heat. We might go first to Tunis, see everything there, visit Sidi-Bou-Saïd where I once had a winter home, then go to the sacred city of Kairouan, where many years ago I spent two or three weeks, and afterwards travel south to Gafsa, Tozeur and Nefta, so that you could have a taste of the desert and see two delicious oases. Then back to Tunis and sail for France. We could do it all easily in the time at our disposal. And we might have a look at the Spanish pictures on our way back to Zürich."

Werner naturally enough was enchanted at this prospect, and before we left La Réserve that night we had made all our new plans.

Two or three days later we sailed for Tunis, and while in Tunisia we stuck to our programme. After seeing the sights of Tunis, and spending two or three days wandering over the plain of Carthage, we went twice to Sidi-Bou-Said, bathed several times in the warm sea at La Marsa, then engaged a powerful motor-car and set off southwards, via Kairouan, to Gafsa and Tozeur. We would stay at Tozeur and from there visit Nefta, which is one of the most fascinating oases I am acquainted with, a dream almost of remote enchantment.

The heat during our journey was certainly very great, and when we at last reached Tozeur I was rather taken aback at finding that the only decent hotel there, the Transatlantic Hotel, was shut up. We had to put up at an inn at the edge of the village inhabited by clouds of flies. We ate our meals at a deal table set out in the road that led into the village, and the food provided seemed mostly to have come out of tins. However, we made the best of things, and Werner was so eagerly interested in everything, and so enthusiastically pleased with

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the strangeness of the African scenery, and with ways of life entirely new to him, that any small hardships and discomforts were overlooked, or quickly forgotten. We undertook expeditions on mule-back; we rode in the desert on camels; we made acquaintance, almost developing into friendship, with some of the natives who could speak French, and eventually, after a brief but wonderful time, we got again into our motor-car and travelled through the wild country back to Tunis and civilization.

When we arrived there we soon heard rumours of war. An American friend of mine, who had a house at Hammamet, turned up at the Tunisia Palace Hotel, and told us that news had come from France advising all foreign visitors in North Africa to pack up as soon as possible and sail for Europe, as war might break out any day. Werner became very anxious about his return to America, and finally we decided to sail for Marseilles on the first available steamer on which we could get accommodation.

We sailed at night, escorted by a warship, and found the steamer crowded with Europeans, many of whom had been staying at Hammamet. My American friend was on board, with an Englishman I had met in Egypt who had been stopping with him, and a Mr. Churchill, who had an important job in the League of Nations at Geneva. Rosita Forbes, the well-known traveller and writer, was also on board with her husband. Every cabin was full and everyone was talking of war. Werner became very anxious about his ship and wondered whether he would have difficulty, perhaps, in getting over to England.

"We'll find out about everything at Marseilles," I said. "War hasn't broken out yet."

On arriving at Marseilles most of the passengers, including those whom I knew on board, took the first express to Paris. But we put up again at the Hôtel Splendide, and made inquiries about Werner's ship.

Everything was already in great confusion, and finally, as it seemed quite probable that Werner would have difficulty in getting to England, and as he was now resolved not to go back to Switzerland for fear of being detained there, perhaps for a long time, perhaps even for the whole course of the war, he made up his mind, if possible, to get accommodation immediately on a ship from Marseilles that was due to sail for America.

There were two such ships about to sail, but they were already full up, and Werner's attempts to get a passage on either of them failed.

We were told at a shipping office that the ship on which Werner had long ago booked a passage would almost certainly call at Cherbourg *en route* to America. As it would be difficult to get to England he was advised to wait in France and join her there. On hearing this we decided to make for Arles and stay there till it was time to travel to Cherbourg.

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"A few more days of peace in Provence!" I said.

And we both hoped for them.

We travelled to Arles and put up at the Hôtel Jules César, where we had stayed on our first visit together to Arles. While we were there Werner urged me to go at once back to Switzerland alone. I refused to do this and suggested that he should come with me. In that case I would go. He had lived for years in Switzerland, had been educated there, had never had anything to do with the Nazi régime, which he detested as Thomas Mann detests it. The Swiss were neutral. They surely would never force him to go back to his country to fight for a cause he loathed. Would he not be safer in Switzerland than in France, if war broke out while we were there, with a German passport? (We were told at that time it was impossible for him to get to England to join his ship there and that he must wait to join her at Cherbourg.) I did my best to persuade him to come to Switzerland, and he did his best to persuade me to leave him and go to Switzerland without him. We both failed. In consequence we remained for two days in Arles and war broke out while we were there.

On the second day of our stay there we decided to pay one more visit to the Moulin de Daudet, and drove to the village nearest to it in a motor-car. The weather was perfect and peace seemed to reign over the land. We left the motor-car in the village, went to a roadside *auberge*, ordered a meal to be ready for us at half an hour after noon, and then made our way to the famous mill. The guardian, who remembered us, greeted us, and we had a short conversation with him, and looked again at the photographs and mementoes of Daudet. Then we went for a long stroll in the deserted, but delicious country, haunted by bees and butterflies, that stretches away on all sides of the mill. It seemed there impossible that perhaps the greatest war in the history of mankind was about to plunge the world into misery.

The whole region seemed to breathe peace.

At half-past twelve we were back in the village and sat down to our meal in the little *auberge*.

While we were eating it we heard outside the window a prolonged cry like the wailing of a woman's voice.

"What's that?" I said.

The wail was repeated. But now we heard several voices. We hurried to the door. There was a gathering crowd of villagers outside. Many of them were weeping women. War had been declared against Germany. The order to mobilize had gone forth.

"We must get back to Arles at once!" Werner said.

That same night we left Arles for Paris, travelling in a train crammed to the doors. Many people had to stand all night.

In Paris we went to the Hôtel Scribe. But we only stayed there for one night. We had decided that Werner must make for Cherbourg

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at once, and wait there till his ship arrived. There was nothing else to be done. We could only hope that his German passport would not be the cause of serious trouble.

No difficulty occurred in Paris, where confusion reigned, though nothing like the confusion that prevailed there when later I was again in the Hôtel Scribe alone, but our departure for Cherbourg was tragic. For our train was crammed with Frenchmen, mostly young, who were rejoining ships, and they were being seen off by weeping women who were carrying gas masks. The train, of course, was terribly overcrowded. We had two or three half-tipsy men in our carriage, and one poor young fellow, opposite to me and not drunk, burst into tears as the train started and we drew out of Paris.

We arrived at Cherbourg about two hours late. There were no conveyances at the station, and no porters were to be seen. With great difficulty we at last got hold of a hand-cart, on which our belongings were piled. We bribed a man, not a porter, to push it and set out on foot to a hotel we had got the name of, which we had been told in Paris was the only decent hotel in Cherbourg. It was at a good distance from the station and close to the sea. As we started to walk to it I heard a rumble of thunder and rain began to fall.

The rain increased rapidly into a downpour, accompanied by flashes of lightning and peals of thunder. As I had noticed that several travellers had got away before us and gone off in the direction of the hotel, I suggested to Werner that he should remain with the luggage cart and I should hurry on, in order, if possible, to engage rooms for us before they were all taken. I hoped also, though I did not say so, that I might manage to prevent the fact of his having only a German passport becoming known to the authorities at the hotel. He agreed to my suggestion and I went at my fastest speed to it.

I found the hall crowded with people. There was a rather amiable looking young man at the bureau. I went up to him, and in my most English, but still affable, manner asked for two rooms and a bathroom.

"There is nothing free, monsieur. Every room is taken," he replied.

I did not budge. Leaning towards him, I murmured, "I am English, the friend of France. Don't refuse me. My friend will be here in a moment. Manage to let us in—please! I am *English.*"

And, as if by chance, I handled some money.

He hesitated, then said, almost in my ear, "Well, perhaps I could manage *one* room. It's a double room with a bathroom. That's all I can do. And I ought not to do that."

"I'll take it!" I said. And a small amount of my money went his way.

"Let me fill up the questionnaire," I said.

He handed me the paper. Quickly I filled it up and he told me the

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number of the room. A few minutes later Werner arrived with the luggage, and he was not asked to fill up any paper.

We went to our room—quite a nice one.

"Now for a good dinner!" I said.

We were both almost starving, having eaten nothing since breakfast.

"Where's the dining-room? Where's the restaurant?"

We sought it and were told, "You can't have any food. There is none. It's all been eaten. And we can't obtain any more."

Dismayed, I exclaimed, "Is there a bar?"

"Yes, monsieur! That way!"

I made for it. The thunderstorm was still continuing at full blast.

The bar was flooded. A shallow lake had invaded the floor. But the barman still lived.

"Have you any champagne?" I inquired.

"Yes, monsieur. We have Pommery."

"Let me have a bottle at once, and some biscuits if there are any."

The bottle was brought to our room with a very few, very dry biscuits.

That was our first dinner in Cherbourg.

During the rest of the time we were there we "fed out," eating in one of the rough little restaurants on the quay of that unprepossessing town.

Yes, unprepossessing! But still—we didn't want to be turned out of it, for it was our only refuge. Nevertheless we were soon turned out.

Cherbourg was crammed with travellers wishing to flee from France and the wrath to come. Most of them seemed to be either full-blown Americans, or people settled in America, or people who wanted to settle there as soon as possible whether with or without leave. The American Consulate was bombarded. The English Consulate was also having a remarkably busy time. I went to both several times, and also to shipping offices, trying to get news of Werner's ship. I explained Werner's situation to both consuls.

The American Consul, a young man, received me smoking a cigarette, and in reply to my statements informed me that he was "not interested," and could do nothing for me.

"Your friend is not an American," he said. "Why should you come to me about him and his ship?"

I said he lived in America, taught at a University there, had to be back at his post on a certain date, and was, moreover, on the way to becoming naturalized in America.

"I am not interested," was the reply.

And another cigarette was lighted.

This was evidently meant as a gesture of dismissal and I retired from the Presence, but not backwards. So far as I can remember, this was

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the only occasion on which an American was disagreeable to me when I was in a difficulty. I have always found American men specially polite, indeed more polite than the men of other nations. For two or three more days Werner and I lingered on in Cherbourg hoping for a ship which never came and trusting that the fact of my friend possessing a German passport would not be discovered.

Then a blow fell. One morning the young man in the office said to us, "You must all be out of the hotel tomorrow morning by six o'clock, sir."

Aghast, I exclaimed, "Why?"

"The hotel is taken over by the military!"

There was nothing to be done. We must pack up and seek other quarters. But where? Cherbourg was crammed with people wanting to leave France but unable to do so.

Having packed up, we set out on our desperate quest.

I shall never forget that day. From dawn till almost dark we trudged the dreary streets of that depressing town seeking shelter and finding none. We visited, of course, every so-called "hotel" and even the smallest inns, and were refused admittance. We even, in desperation, called at houses of ill-fame, explained why we came and begged for a room. All rooms were occupied. At last towards evening we visited a second time a dingy inn near the quay with whose proprietor we had already had an interview.

"Do get us in tomorrow!" I begged of him. "We'll sleep anywhere. But we can't live in the street."

"We are full up, monsieur! I told you so this morning."

"I'll pay you well," I murmured. "Name your price."

This remark seemed to produce some impression, and at last the man said, "I can promise you nothing, but you can call again in the morning."

"We'll call!"

This was a faint ray of hope. I added, "We'll bring our luggage."

"I can't promise, monsieur."

"Bon soir, monsieur."

Early in the morning, with our luggage on a hand-cart, we returned to the inn and the proprietor said, "I can let you have two small rooms."

"We'll take them. The price?"

He named it, and it was of course exorbitant, but I did not dispute it and he showed us the rooms. They were small, miserably furnished, and looked very dirty and repulsive. However, we couldn't be choosers and of course I took them, but I remember saying to Werner, "It will be a tragedy having to get into those awful beds. I dread tonight."

"So do I!" he rejoined.

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But Fate interposed. We never passed a night in that inn. For, on visiting a shipping office later on in the day, to inquire once more about the movements of shipping, we were informed that the ship on which Werner had originally meant to sail for America was probably going to call at Le Havre, and that we had better take the first available train to that port. In consequence we left Cherbourg within two or three hours, after paying for the rooms we had never occupied. Goodbye to Cherbourg—I hope for ever.

After an awful journey in trains crammed almost to suffocation we arrived early in the morning at Le Havre. I had been told that there was a large and excellent hotel there close to the sea, and we went there by tram, leaving our luggage at the station. On the way there we stood waiting for a few minutes on an "island." On this island we were joined by two travellers, a girl and one of the most remarkable-looking young men I have ever set eyes on. Evidently they were making a walking tour together, for they carried knapsacks on their backs, heavy sticks and were shod with stout boots. The man, I thought, looked like an American athlete who probably had some Northern European blood in him, possibly Swedish.

He was a giant, fair and very good-looking, wore shorts and an open shirt, and his arms were bare almost to the shoulder. He had large eyes with an adventurous expression in them set wide apart. He bore himself like a young conqueror. Our tram came up. We got into it. I have never seen him again and know absolutely nothing about him. But when some time ago I wrote a long novel called *Veils*, which will shortly be published, I introduced into it a portrait of this young man, seen for five minutes at Le Havre on the island, giving him, of course, his own wonderful appearance, and drawing an imaginary portrait of his character and conduct.

Our tram took us near to the Hôtel Frascati, which we both thought looked promising after the squalor of Cherbourg. We hastened into the great hall and asked for two rooms and if possible a bathroom. The smart young man in the bureau cast on us a look of mingled surprise and pity.

"The hotel is quite full, sir. I am sorry."

So were we! I asked if he could give me the name of another good hotel, if possible near by He complied. But he added, "I'm afraid all the hotels in Le Havre are quite full. But you might try one of the hotels by the station."

Once more we set out in search of refuge.

In the hotel he had mentioned, which was not far off and close to the quay, we succeeded in finding one good room free. We took it, of course, fetched our luggage and settled down in it. And I remained in the hotel until finally I left Le Havre and went back to Paris alone.

Our final separation came about in a tragic way.

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We spent a good many days at Le Havre, sleeping at our hotel but taking most of our meals at the excellent Hôtel Frascati. We were waiting for news of Werner's ship. Would it, or would it not, call at Le Havre? Day after day we visited shipping offices and were told first one thing and then another. Now it was said that the boat would certainly call at Le Havre. Then we were informed that Werner would probably have to join her at Bordeaux. Meanwhile we had to visit the Police and give an account of ourselves, but, rather to my surprise, we were kindly treated, and when I explained Werner's exact situation, and stated that he was an anti-Nazi and was a teacher at an American University, and on the way to become an American citizen, no measures were taken against him, beyond telling him that he must show himself at the police station at certain times.

We filled up our days as best we could, taking walks, making two or three expeditions into the neighbouring country, reading and writing letters. One day we motored to Etretat, which I had read about but had never seen. André Gide, I knew, lived near there at Cuverville, and I connected the place with one of my favourite French writers, Guy de Maupassant. I was terribly disappointed with Etretat, which for me has little or no attraction. There is no sand. A beach of stones and shingle goes steeply down into a sea which on the day of our visit had the colour of lead. In front of this was a gloomy "promenade." We lunched at the chief hotel, where, to my surprise, I was waited on by an Arab who had waited on me in North Africa during two visits I had paid to Tlemçen.

He did not seem at all surprised to see me, but I was quite startled to see him. He told me calmly that he was there for "the season."

"Et après?"

"Tlemçen, Monsieur. C'est mon pays."

We knew nobody in Le Havre, but in the Frascati Hotel we made the acquaintance of two elderly ladies, friends travelling together, who, like Werner, were waiting in the hope of getting a ship to take them back to America where they lived.

Their names were Mademoiselle Marguerite Mespoulet and—the name of the other has escaped me.

They were very charming and highly cultivated women, lived together in New York and lectured, I believe, at Columbia University. Mademoiselle Mespoulet lectured on French literature, of which she evidently had a wide knowledge. They got to know Werner first, heard his story and were very sympathetic. He introduced me to them and I had some interesting conversations with them both. They understood my anxiety about Werner's awkward situation. Before we had decided what was to be done about a ship they, in despair of any ship for America calling at Le Havre, departed to some place in the neighbourhood of Bordeaux, leaving their American address with

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Werner, after obtaining his promise to visit them when, if ever, he got back to the States.

Mademoiselle Mespoulet expressed herself with great frankness about living French authors, on whose merits we could not always agree. I told her of my great admiration for the work of Monsieur André Gide. She replied that in her opinion, though he had, of course, great talent, he was a singularly dangerous writer, especially for the young. She even said that she did not believe any French author then alive had done so much harm as Monsieur Gide had. I then spoke of Colette, and to my surprise, as I had begun to think she was a severe moralist, she praised Colette with great enthusiasm. In my turn I agreed about the talent of the writer in question, but expressed my disgust at the company one was forced to keep whenever one opened a book by Colette. Werner and I had just been reading *La Mort de Chéri* and it had filled both of us with a sort of sickness of disgust. Mademoiselle Mespoulet, however, was enchanted with Colette's art. I concluded the quite amicable conversation by saying,

"Her manner no doubt is supremely accomplished, but her matter seems to me generally beneath contempt."

We were sorry when these charming women left us, and Werner began to wonder what was going to become of him. Would his ship ever appear in the dingy port of Le Havre? Ought he to make for Bordeaux? While he hesitated and I knew not what to advise, Fate took a hand in the game.

Every morning after breakfast I went out to a kiosk on the quay and bought a Havre newspaper. One morning when I did this my eyes fell on a notice prominently printed ordering all *étrangers* in Le Havre to present themselves that day at a certain address in order that their passports might be inspected by the authorities. The address given was one to which we had never yet gone.

I showed the notice to Werner without uttering a word of comment. He read it, looked at me, and said:

"Well, we must go there."

"Yes," I said. "We may as well go at once and get it over."

I had at that moment the definite feeling that what we had both been dreading for many days was close upon us.

We set out on foot to the building indicated. When we reached it I had the conviction that our close association was about to be severed. I don't know what Werner thought. He said nothing.

An official at the door told us to go into a room on the right. We obeyed, and behind a long table found three Frenchmen sitting in a row. The man in the middle had a large coarse face, looked at me angrily and extended his hand.

"Your passports!"

Werner held out his.

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The man seized it, opened it, examined it, and exclaimed, "Ha! Vous êtes un sale Bosche!"

Still holding the passport, he pressed an electric bell.

Two gendarmes came in instantly.

"Voilà un Bosche!" he exclaimed, pointing to Werner. "Take him away!"

Before I could say or do anything the gendarmes took Werner by the arm and led him out of the room.

I have never seen him alone since that day, years ago. But I did see him again.

When he had gone I began to explain about him to the middle man behind the long table, but he cut me short.

"Your passport!" he almost shouted. "Your passport!"

I gave it to him.

"What!" he cried. "You an Englishman travelling with a German!"

Again I attempted an explanation, but he would not listen. Evidently he was in a condition bordering on hysteria.

"You can go! You can go!" he cried, waving his arm towards the door. "Go away!"

I went.

A great cloud of loneliness seemed to descend upon me. I felt frustrated. My efforts had been in vain. Werner was a prisoner in the hands of the French, and might be in captivity for months, perhaps even for years, possibly through the whole of the coming war.

I forget how I got through that horrible day. Evening fell. Usually we had dined at the Frascati Hotel, but that night I had no appetite, and at about eight o'clock was up in my bedroom when a *chasseur* came in and said that two ladies were asking to see me.

"Impossible!" I said. "I know no one in Le Havre."

The *chasseur* held out a bit of paper. On it was scrawled "Monsieur Itchens."

I accompanied him downstairs and found waiting below two poorly dressed young women, whose nationality I never discovered.

"Did you want me?" I asked in French.

"Oui!" said the elder one, holding out a bit of paper towards me.

I took it and saw Werner's handwriting.

"Can you come and see me? I am in the Rue Zola. Please bring me a few toilet things, what you can. I have nothing, absolutely nothing. I am only here for the night, I believe, with other prisoners."

I begged the two women, who I found were relations of one of the prisoners, to wait, hurried upstairs, put together a few things of Werner's, procured a parcel of food and set out in the dark with them on foot to the Rue Zola.

There, in a sort of large yard, backed by the lighted windows of a

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school, I found Werner anxiously awaiting me. He grasped my hand.

"I'm glad you could come. I have nothing, not even a toothbrush. I don't know where we are going to sleep."

I gave him what I had brought, and we had a brief interview surrounded by unfortunate strangers, now prisoners like Werner.

When we parted Werner asked me if possible to see him again early in the morning. It seemed that a visit would be permitted. I promised to come and bring him clothes, an overcoat and a rug, as well as some provisions. But late that night a message was brought from Werner telling me not to come, as they were all to start for an unknown destination at five o'clock on the following morning.

"Goodbye!" was the concluding word of the note.

In spite of it, I bought at the hotel a large package of cold food and a bottle of wine, took a cab and drove to the school. I did not see Werner. But I tipped the guard, who promised to find him and give the parcel. He kept his word, as I afterwards found out.

On the following day Werner was gone.

It seemed entirely useless for me to prolong my stay in Le Havre, and I received telegrams from John Knittel urging me to return as soon as possible to Switzerland, but for two or three days I stayed where I was, hoping perhaps to learn something about Werner's fate. I am glad I did that, for I received a message from him giving me the address of the camp where he was confined, which was in the wilds of Normandy, about a hundred and fifty kilometres away from Le Havre. As soon as this came I chartered a powerful motor, packed up some of Werner's clothes and a large basket of provisions, and set off early in the morning for the camp. I had a great deal of difficulty in finding it, but I reached it at last, and was taken before the Commandant, who was seated at *déjeuner* with several officers.

When I explained why I had come they received me politely and said I should be allowed to see Werner for a few minutes, though not alone, and that he could have the food I had brought and his clothes. But the Commandant explained that there could be no question of his release.

Werner was sent for, and we had a brief and troubled interview in the presence of the Commandant and those who were with him.

During it Werner urged me to leave Le Havre.

"Perhaps you could do something for me in Paris?" he suggested tentatively.

I said I would try, and then, turning to the Commandant, asked him to whom I had better apply with any chance of obtaining Werner's release. He could suggest nothing, though he was not unsympathetic. Finally I bade Werner goodbye and set off on the long and dreary drive back to Le Havre. During it I thought of leaving immediately for Paris, but when I was back in the hotel I felt that I could not

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abandon Werner without one more attempt to do something for him. And two days later I again hired a motor, journeyed once more to the camp and confronted the Commandant and his staff.

This time I asked him who in this part of France had the power to release Werner if he chose to exercise it. He replied that he believed the General in command of Rouen, and the district round Rouen, might be able to do it.

"Then I shall go now to Rouen," I said, and asked for the General's address.

The Commandant gave it to me. For the last time I saw Werner and told him what I was going to do. Then we said goodbye. My last words to him were,

"If I fail at Rouen I'll go to Paris and see if I can do anything there. Write to me at the Scribe Hotel when I've let you know what has happened at Rouen."

So we parted. I have never seen him again.

When I arrived in Rouen I managed to get hold of the General's private address there. He lived in a flat. I went to it and asked for him. He happened to be at home and received me. When I had explained that I was English, but was acting for a German friend who was entirely anti-Nazi and who was now in a camp, he said, "I can't help you in this matter. But I will give you a card to the officer who is in charge of the fate of those confined in the camp you mention. Take it and try to see him. Possibly he might be able to do something."

I thanked him, took the card on which he had written a few words, and went at once to the address which he gave me.

There I was kept waiting for a very long time in a gloomy hall facing a flight of stone steps, and was almost in despair when at last an attendant came and asked me to follow him. He took me into a room where three young officers were writing at a long table.

A fourth man, tall and young also, greeted me and asked what I wanted. I told him. He said, "Well, I'll go to Colonel ——" he mentioned a name I have forgotten—"he is in control of this sort of thing."

He went away and in a few minutes came and said, "Please come with me."

I obeyed, was shown into another room, in which several men in uniform were writing and talking, and was presented to the Colonel, who received me very courteously, even sympathetically, and asked me to explain my mission. This I did as quickly and concisely as I could, keenly aware of my listeners.

When I had finished, the Colonel sat for a minute or two, evidently thinking things over. I waited, and then once more put in a plea for Werner.

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"Ah yes, I know! I know!" the Colonel said, with a smile, speaking French. "There are individual Germans who are charming —charming."

(He spread out his hands.)

"But as a *race*, o la, la!"

Then he paused, leaned towards me, smiled again, rather subtly I thought, and said, "Monsieur, I can release your friend from the camp on one condition."

"Name it!" I exclaimed, filled with hope.

"He must sign on to join the Foreign Legion in Africa for a period of five years."

I thought of Werner and all hope died away.

"Mon Colonel," I said, "my friend is an intellectual."

"Ha!" said the Colonel. "An *intellectual*. Then—there's nothing to be done?"

"Nothing!" I replied.

We shook hands and parted. As I left the room all the officers in it were smiling.

XXXI

I LEFT Rouen feeling very depressed. Evidently there was nothing more I could do from Le Havre. That night I wrote to tell Werner so, and on the following day I travelled to Paris and put up as usual at the Hôtel Scribe.

Although I had stayed in Paris a good many times I had never lived there. Nor had I ever wished to live there. And I had never attempted to get into society in Paris. Long ago, when travelling in the Sahara, I had made friends with the Marquis de Polignac, who had told me that if I ever settled down in Paris he would introduce me to his mother and make me known to some of their friends, but I had never taken advantage of his kind offer. I knew very few people in Paris and scarcely any intimately.

What could I do in Paris for Werner?

The first person I called upon was Princess Sixte de Bourbon. I had never met H.R.H., but we had corresponded, for she had translated my book *On the Screen* into perfect French, and had won with her translation the yearly prize given by the Académie Française for the best translation of the year. She had also translated several short stories of mine into French and published them, as well as "Sur

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l'Ecran," in *Gringoire*, and she had recently translated my book *The Dweller on the Threshold* under the title of *Son Double*. In one of her letters to me H.R.H. had asked me to call upon her if I was ever in Paris when she was.

Now was the opportunity. Vaguely I thought that as H.R.H. was so well known, and had written to me so cordially, she might possibly advise me what to do for a man in Werner's situation. A forlorn hope, perhaps, but I had it. The Princess was in Paris, and by telephone asked me to call on her at about five o'clock in the afternoon at her apartment.

I went there, and found her in the drawing-room with a dark man who had very intelligent eyes. This was Monsieur de Carbuccia, the proprietor of *Gringoire*.

After a short conversation *à trois* he left us and I had a long talk with the Princess alone and congratulated her on her perfect translations of some of my writings. I was able to tell her truthfully that she had made me like my work better in French than in English.

Towards the end of my visit I ventured to speak to her about my friend Werner, and my desire, if possible, to obtain his release from the Normandy camp. She showed a great deal of sympathy but said that she had no power to influence the authorities in his favour, though she knew many people highly placed and with influence.

"I wish I could help you," she said. "But I can't. Whom do you know in Paris?"

"Very few people!" I acknowledged.

"Do you know anyone at your Embassy?" she asked. "Or at the American Embassy?"

After a moment's thought I said I knew slightly Sir Charles Mendel, who was attached at that time to the staff of the British Embassy.

"Why not go to him?" she said. "Anyone else?"

"I know rather well the Duke and Duchess of Nemours," I said. "The Duchess is an American."

"She might tell you if anything could be done through the American Embassy."

I said that I would see if that was possible, thanked H.R.H. for her kindness and got up to go.

Since that day she has translated into French my long story called "My Desert Friend." This was to have run through *Gringoire* and been published in book form in French, but the war has put an end to that possibility as well as to so many others. *Gringoire* has become pro-German and entirely anti-British. I was interested to read in it an enormous article by Monsieur de Carbuccia attacking fiercely my friend Mr. Somerset Maugham, who had been an intimate friend of his.

My next move in Paris was to find out whether the Duke and Duchess of Nemours were in the capital.

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Fortunately they were, and the Duke asked me to come and see him at his club in the Champs Elysées. The Duchess joined us there and a friend of theirs from the Roumanian Legation, and we went out to tea in a tea-shop near the Arc de Triomphe. After tea the Duchess and I went shopping and I had a talk with her about Werner. Her advice was this: "Don't bother about the little people. They can't do anything for you. Go to the top. Don't you know Mr. Bullitt, our Ambassador?"

By "our" she meant the American Ambassador. I said I had never met him. She replied that for certain reasons, which she did not explain, she couldn't give me a personal introduction to him, but she said, "He'll know all about you. Write a letter to him explaining what you want and leave it yourself at the Embassy. I'm sure he'll attend to it and may be able to help you."

I decided to do this. But before I could do it I was forced to concentrate on my own situation and affairs, which I had been neglecting.

Paris at this time was in a state of almost indescribable confusion. All the stations were bombarded by people of all the nations apparently passionately determined to get away from the city. Before the Central Police Station thousands congregated every day in the open air trying to get in. All the Legations seemed to be besieged. One had somehow to obtain special permission for almost every movement one made or did not make. And I found eventually that neither could I remain in Paris beyond a certain date, nor could I quit Paris for Switzerland without another permission. Your precious passport had to be stamped in the proper way before you could do, or refrain from doing, almost anything. And to force your way to those who had the power to attend to you or help you was a matter of almost incredible difficulty.

Every day I spent hours in trying to get my affairs in order, and many of those hours were wasted in merely waiting about in the vain hope of attracting the attention of harassed officials driven almost crazy by overwork.

Meanwhile, however, I did not forget that I had come to Paris if possible to help Werner, who wrote one or two guarded letters to me in French from his camp in Normandy. All his communications, of course, came under the scrutiny of the camp's Commandant.

Remembering my conversation with the Duchess of Nemours, I went to the British Embassy and asked if I could see Sir Charles Mendel. The first time I went he was too busy to be seen, but the second time, when I sent in my card, he sent out to say that if I could wait a few minutes he would see me with pleasure.

Of course I waited, and eventually I was conducted to the room in which he was working.

I only knew Sir Charles slightly, having met him in Egypt, but I

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had known his wife long before she married him, when she was Miss Elsie de Wolfe and came sometimes to London with Miss Elizabeth Marbury. When I came in he greeted me with the remark, "I told my wife you had called here and she asked me to give you her kind remembrances. Now what can I do for you?"

I explained why I was in Paris, and the unfortunate situation of my friend Werner whom I was anxious to help, and Sir Charles said at once that he was afraid he had no power to persuade the authorities to free a man with a German passport.

"In such an awful crisis as this they are very severe," he said. "And one can't blame them, even though innocent people have to suffer."

He then turned the conversation to my position in Paris, and I told him I lived in Switzerland and must get back there as soon as possible.

"Have you got a visa for Switzerland on your passport?" he asked.

I said that I hadn't and must get hold of one. I had tried already to obtain one, and had waited for hours at the Swiss Consulate but in vain.

"I'll give you a letter to the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Stücki," he said. "I know him well. He's a very cultivated man and I'm sure he'll give you the visa. Just wait a minute."

He then wrote a note to the Minister and gave it to me.

"I advise you to go at once to the Legation with this," he said. "And send it in to the Minister. I'm sure he will see you."

I thanked him for his kindness, gave him a message for Lady Mendel and we parted.

I took his advice and went at once to the Swiss Legation with my precious letter.

The Minister, I was told, was there in his work-room, and an attendant took in the letter to him and came back. Meanwhile I sat waiting. There was a pause that seemed to me very long, but at last a bell sounded a summons, and I was shown in to the Minister.

Monsieur Stücki, I thought, seemed doubtful about doing what I wanted, and asked me several questions about the reason of my being domiciled in Switzerland. However, he presently seemed convinced that I was not dangerous and asked me to produce my passport.

It happened that though, of course, it was valid I had had it for a long time, and during that time had travelled a great deal. In consequence of this the pages were very full of stamped official permissions to go here and there. Monsieur Stücki turned over the pages, examined them with attention, and finally said, "There's no room here for a visa. You will have to get your passport renewed and then come back again."

Desperation seized me, and I exclaimed, perhaps with some heat: "I will find a place for the visa!"

"I'm afraid you can't!"

"Please let me look for a moment. I am sure there is one."

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He gave me back the passport. I hurriedly turned the pages and at last found a small gap uncovered by any official stamp.

"Here!" I said. "Here there's room!"

The Minister still looked very doubtful, but there was just room, and at last he affixed the visa and I had the permission to re-enter Switzerland.

Something gained! I could now leave Paris.

But I must get on at once with my efforts for Werner.

I went back to my hotel, sat down and wrote a letter to the American Ambassador. I made it as short as possible, put it in an envelope and set out to the American Embassy with it.

There I was received by a most remarkable-looking personage, a huge negro in livery, with a large smiling face and tremendous shoulders, to whom I presented my letter and visiting-card.

He took both away and presently came back with a message that the Ambassador was engaged, sitting, I understood, "in conclave," but that my letter and card had been given to him.

Wondering whether he would ever have time and inclination to cast a glance at them, I thanked the majestic servitor and walked away in the brilliant sunshine, wondering also whether, if he did, His Excellency would do anything to help me. He did not know me, though he probably knew of me. I thought of my reception by the American Consul at Cherbourg and my heart was heavy.

It need not have been.

I had not been back in my hotel for half an hour before I was told that I was rung up from the American Embassy. I answered the call and a pleasant male voice inquired whether I was Mr. Robert Hichens. I said I was and the voice informed me, "I am a secretary of the American Embassy. The Ambassador has had your letter and card and asks me to say that he is extremely sorry he cannot receive you until the end of the week, next Saturday afternoon. If you can come to the Embassy then at about four o'clock he will be delighted to have a talk with you. But meanwhile he advises you to go to the Swedish Legation about your friend in the camp. The Swedish Minister is looking after the cases of prisoners and may be able to help you."

"One moment, please!" I said. "I must look at my passport."

I hurried to get it and turned to the visa I had obtained from Monsieur Stücki. On examining it I saw that on the following Saturday I must get out of Paris.

To cut a rather long story of difficulties short, I never saw the kind Ambassador, whom I thanked through the telephone, but I did go to the Swedish Legation and asked the authorities there to do anything they could for my friend, Werner. After that I was forced to concentrate on my own affairs.

I might now go to Switzerland if I left before the week was up.

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But I had to obtain the permission to leave Paris. To get this I had to take my passport to a certain enormous office in the centre of Paris which was being bombarded by thousands of people, fight my way somehow to a certain guichet and leave my passport there for two days, after which I must fight my way back to fetch it.

After endless trouble I did get to the guichet, almost in a state of collapse, handed in my passport, received in return a receipt for it and was told that if I called on the following Wednesday morning, or any morning after that, it would be returned to me and I could escape from Paris.

So far so good. The day was Monday. I was now free to do what I liked for a little while.

One night I dined with the Nemours to take leave of them and we saw the Champs Elysées by moonlight unspoilt by the lights of Paris, which were all dimmed or extinguished. At the restaurant to which I went with them and some friends, including the Esthonian Minister and his wife, I saw Madame Chanel, the famous dressmaker, dining with Jean Cocteau, the witty *enfant terrible* of French literature.

Before I left my kind host and hostess they told me that they had bought a piece of land in a magnificent situation above Tangier in Morocco, and that as soon as the war was over they were going to build an ideal little house there.

"Promise you will come to stay with us there!" they said.

I said I should like nothing better. Now I often think of that invitation and wonder whether the house will ever be built, and if it is, whether I shall live to behold it.

I believe they have given up the charming green bungalow at Rabat in which John Knittel and I spent pleasant days with them. The Duke's mother, the Duchess of Vendôme, has, or had, a large property in Morocco not far from Rabat, which he used to administer for H.R.H.

I did not go to fetch my passport on the Wednesday, but waited till Thursday, and on Thursday morning, early once more, with even greater difficulty and exertion than before, I fought my way through the clamouring crowd, and at last, almost wilting and streaming with perspiration, stood panting before my guichet—as I thought of it—and handed in my receipt to the young woman who had given it to me.

"My passport, please!"

"It hasn't come in yet!" was the appalling reply.

"Not come in! But you promised it would be here without fail yesterday."

"Yes, I know. But it isn't in yet."

"When will it be in?"

"I couldn't tell you."

"But if it doesn't come by Saturday I can't go to Switzerland. My

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visa will be up. I shall miss my train! And then I may neither leave Paris nor may I remain in Paris."

"I'm sorry, monsieur. But, as I tell you, it hasn't come in."

"Is it lost?"

"I don't know, monsieur."

Real desperation seized me. Possibly it was that desperation which brought with it a moment which I have thought of since as a moment of inspiration. Anyhow, this is what happened.

Behind the young woman was a series of pigeon-holes fixed against the wall. They were numbered. My eyes fell upon one of the numbers. I forget which. In this pigeon-hole I could see a lot of documents of some kind.

"I believe my passport has come in," I said. "I believe it's in that pigeon-hole."

And I mentioned the number.

"But, monsieur, I have told you that—"

"Please look!" I urged. "I shall stay here till you look!"

I suppose in my agony my manner became overpowering. Anyhow, reluctantly she examined the pigeon-hole. And my passport was in it.

The situation was saved, but the young Frenchwoman at the guichet looked rather indignant. I doubt if she ever forgave me. But I thanked her with my sweetest smile and left her—for ever, I hope—in triumph.

Going back to my hotel, I packed, wrote an account of these happenings to Werner, then sat down in the armchair by my bedside and took up a huge volume which I was reading—*Gone with the Wind* in a French translation.

But I didn't read very much. Suddenly I felt, though no longer desperate, terribly tired, both physically and mentally, indeed near to exhaustion. All I had gone through since, in the *auberge* near Daudet's mill in Provence, I had heard the wailing of a woman's voice announcing mobilization, seemed suddenly to come upon me with the force of a blow, and I felt nearly finished.

However, in not many hours I should be safely in Switzerland.

But, alas, leaving Werner behind me in the Normandy camp! Well, I could do no more for him.

Saturday came. I had managed to get a compartment in the sleeping-car on the express leaving Paris in the afternoon and reaching the Swiss frontier early on the following morning. I resolved to go to the station very early. I did go, but to my dismay found it apparently in the hands of a struggling mob of excited people, all of whom were evidently determined to get out of Paris that afternoon. There were no porters. I did not see even one.

Once again my heart almost failed. I had heavy luggage. Impossible to carry it all through the crowd to the train without help.

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What on earth was I to do? I saw myself left with it in Paris, my train gone, and without permission to stay any longer there.

I had almost abandoned the hope of getting away when I saw in the distance a man in a sort of uniform with a cap on which there was lettering.

It was a man from the American Express Company. Here, perhaps, was my chance. I caught his eye and beckoned to him, not imploringly but imperatively. He struggled towards me.

"What is it, sir?"

"I must catch the express to Switzerland. I've got a compartment in the sleeping-car. Will you help me with my luggage? I need hardly say that I'll make it well worth your while."

"Of course I will, sir, with pleasure. There's not a porter in the place."

Between us, not without a hard struggle, we managed to convey the luggage to the sleeping-car. And, though not on time, eventually my train glided out of the maelstrom of wartime Paris.

Probably, in my comfortable compartment I ought to have felt at last happy and relieved as I thought of my home in so far peaceful Switzerland and the warm welcome that I knew awaited me there, but I remember that I merely felt exhausted, emptied and dull. Nevertheless I believe I did feel, must have felt, that my trials and troubles, the personal ones, were over. No other difficulties of an unexpected kind surely awaited me.

I was wrong if I did venture to indulge in such expectations.

Fate apparently wanted to trip me up at the very last moment.

I went to my narrow bed early and presently fell asleep.

I was eventually wakened by a loud knock on my door. I turned on the light and looked at my watch. It was early morning, I think about six o'clock.

The knock was repeated. I opened the door. An official was outside, who told me we had reached the Swiss frontier, and that I must dress and present myself with my passport at an office in the station! I had thought that the examination would take place in the train as usual.

I dressed hurriedly. The morning was very cold, damp and raw. I put on my overcoat and made my way to the office. There my passport was examined by an official and given back to me. Then came the question, "How much French money have you in your possession?"

I had brought away with me rather more than six thousand French francs. And I said so.

"Why? You had no right to do that. You know the rules about money."

"I knew nothing about any rules," I said.

"Were you in a hotel?"

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"Yes, I was at the Hôtel Scribe."

"Do you mean to say they didn't tell you there that you could only take out of Paris just enough money to enable you to reach your destination?"

"They never said anything to me about money. No one said anything."

The man looked at me with perhaps a suspicion of pity.

Then he said, "I'm sorry, monsieur, but you'll have to go back to Paris."

This time I had my back to the wall, and I said, "I won't go back to Paris."

"You must, monsieur."

"I won't. I have no permission to be in Paris. My permission has expired. I live in Switzerland. I am domiciled there. And I won't go back to Paris."

"But, monsieur, with all that French money on you you must."

"I will not go back, unless you carry me forcibly into a train for Paris and lock me into it. Nothing but force will make me return to Paris. Take the money, if you must. Take the six thousand francs and leave me with just enough to get back to Ragaz with. But nothing except force will induce me to go back to Paris."

My crude and desperate determination evidently impressed the authorities, for the end of it was that after two or three officials had consulted together I handed over six thousand francs, got, of course, a receipt for them, and was allowed to continue my journey. On the following evening, exhausted and with only a few francs in my possession, I got out at the Ragaz station and motored to our home above Maienfeld.

From that day to this I have not put a foot out of Switzerland except once when I spent a few hours in the tiny Kingdom of Liechtenstein just across the frontier.

Through the bank at Ragaz I eventually received the thousands of French francs I had left behind me when I crossed from France into Switzerland.

XXXII

I HAVE been reading all I have now written of these recollections and should like to explain to my readers not why I have included in this book so much, but why I have omitted to deal with certain events in my life which might have some interest for some of them.

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For instance, I have not described the three journeys I undertook at the request of the *Century Magazine* directors of America.

I thought it wiser to omit this because in my three published books, *Egypt and its Monuments*, *The Holy Land*, and *The Near East* I have written at some length about what I saw, and what happened to me on these wanderings. Why, therefore, reprint in another form what can be read elsewhere?

But I have also left out two striking events with which I had some connection. In the first I was merely a spectator. When the second occurred I was, fortunately for me, not a spectator, but just missed being in an awful catastrophe, and after it was over was witness of the results of it, described them for the British Public, and for a considerable time worked with others to bring some help to many of those who had suffered in it.

I saw the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, and I only just escaped, because of my love of opera, from arriving in Messina either during or immediately after the awful earthquake there.

The Pageant in honour of Queen Victoria's sixty years' reign I witnessed from the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral, as a member of the choir which sang the Te Deum while Her Majesty sat listening to it in her open gala carriage, with the great ones of the earth grouped around her on horseback.

Yes, I was a member of the choir and wore a surplice, although I can't sing and have never sung either as a soloist or as a member of a chorus. This was owing to my friendship with Sir George Martin, the organist of St. Paul's, and his wife Lady Martin.

I knew them both well and liked them very much. Several times I sat in the Cathedral organ-loft when Sir George was playing at the service, and when the day of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee was approaching he asked me where I was going to see the Procession from.

I replied that I hadn't decided yet, though I had had two or three invitations to windows.

"Would you like to see the whole thing very comfortably and in an intimate way?" he then asked me.

"Indeed I should," I replied.

"Can you sing?" was his next question.

"Not a note," I answered.

"Well, can you open your mouth in time as if you were singing?"

"I feel sure I could do that."

"Then if you have no objection to putting on a surplice I'll get you into the choir which is going to sing the Te Deum when the Queen's carriage draws up at the foot of the steps. You'll be standing close to Her Majesty and see everything splendidly, apart from hearing the Te Deum. What do you say? Will you accept?"

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Had this question been put to me at a much later date I should perhaps have replied, "Will I accept! And *how*?" But that slogan, which I heard later from the lips of Royalty, had not come into vogue then, and I contented myself with an earnest "Yes!"

And so it was that from the steps of St. Paul's I heard the Te Deum, standing among the singers, and was able to watch the Queen and all the mounted Royalties at close quarters.

It was a very grand and inspiring sight, but I will not try to add my humble description of it now to the multitudes of descriptions which have been given of it by the cleverest journalists of the world. As I was dumb during the Te Deum, so I will control myself now. But I must just note two things which struck me while I stood on the steps of St. Paul's a few yards only from the Royal carriage. The place is now marked by a stone let into the pavement.

One was the obvious emotion of the Prince of Wales, who was of course on horseback; the other was the extraordinary self-possession of the Queen, who might easily, one thought, have been completely overwhelmed by the tribute being paid to her, and by the full-throated hymn of praise that was being sung to God because of what had happened to her—length of years—and because of the feeling of the multitude assembled about her. The Prince looked to me like a man struggling against an emotion so violent that he could scarcely control it.

And the Queen? She looked very hot. She sat perfectly still in the magnificent carriage. Her dignity was obvious, though it had not the least touch of arrogance. There seemed no self-consciousness about her. There was even, I thought, a certain almost religious simplicity, as if in her heart, at that marvellous moment, she was thanking God for what had been given to her and for all that was being given then. I could not help feeling her greatness, not because of the grandeur in which she was, as it were, framed, but because of what I seemed to divine, by sympathy, that she was feeling. The outward trappings were superb. But for the moment one forgot them.

One only thought of, one only seemed to feel, what the little old lady sitting there in the carriage must be, *was* feeling. How often in her long life she had been greeted by the words, "God save the Queen." And God had saved her—for this. Surely she was voicelessly singing her private "Te Deum."

I shall never forget her as she was then.

The scenes at Messina during and after the earthquake there have been described at length in the newspapers and in many books of reminiscences. I was on my way to Taormina and was at Naples when it occurred. I had intended to travel to Messina on the night before the earthquake, but delayed my journey because an opera

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which I wished to hear was announced for that night at the San Carlo Theatre. In consequence I missed arriving in Messina in the early morning of the day when the earthquake took place. For a couple of days it was impossible to get to Sicily, but I took the first boat to Palermo and travelled on from there by train to Taormina, standing up the whole way as all seats were taken. When at night I reached Taormina I found there waiting for me a cable from the *Daily Telegraph* of London, asking me to telegraph to the offices of that paper a full account of everything I could tell them about the earthquake and the condition of things in Messina. I forget how the knowledge of my being probably in Sicily had come to Lord Burnham.

Although I was terribly tired by my exhausting journey I went early the next day to the ruined city, and spent many hours there amid scenes of suffering and horror which almost baffled description. There were, of course, at work all those who had not been killed, digging out buried corpses and releasing, when it was possible, those still alive but imprisoned in the heaps of fallen masonry.

I repeated my visit on two or three following days and sent to the *Telegraph* long descriptions of all I had seen, which were published immediately.

When this painful and very fatiguing task was over I spent a good many weeks with others who were in Taormina bringing as much help as was possible to the swarms of fugitives who had got away, penniless most of them, from the doomed city. Committees were formed and I sat on two of them, one of which was organized and headed by the Duke of Bronte. Like several others, I received a decoration from the Italian Government for my services.

One curious thing was told to me by a Sicilian fisherman whom I knew in Taormina. Before the earthquake took place, very early in the morning, he was going down the steep hill from the village to the seashore. Just before he reached it, to his amazement and horror he saw the sea suddenly recede, exposing to his view rocks which till then had been always invisible. He stared at the phenomenon, thinking that surely he was crazy. Then the sea returned, a great wave rolling in towards him.

"It was the earthquake, signorino!" he told me. "Per Dio, it was the earthquake!"

I am writing this on the eve, apparently, of the invasion of the European Fortress, as it has been called, by the Allies. Although I still have a home near Maienfeld, to which I can go whenever I like, for a long time I have been living and working usually in the city of Zürich, where I have an apartment, and several kind friends as well as a good many acquaintances. The persistent restlessness bred in me and in a great number of other people by the shocks of the war has driven me away for a time from the placidity of the countryside, where

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each day one meets slow processions of Swiss cows on the roads and sees the sheep flocks nibbling the grass spread like a great carpet under the oak and walnut trees behind the wall of our garden.

In the depths of the country one seems to have too much leisure for thought, and in such times as these thought brings one little but pain. Of course one thinks always, but in a city distractions catch at the mind and bring some relief from a perpetual preoccupation about public events that might become unhealthy and even ruinous.

In Zürich I have succeeded in enjoying some almost happy moments under the blessed spell of music. In spite of the difficulty of travelling, from time to time great musicians come to visit us here. Some of them have been Germans. Among non-Germans perhaps the most prominent and rewarding have been Madame Flagstad, the glorious Norwegian opera-singer; Monsieur Cortot, the famous pianist; that supreme executant, Señor Casals; and Monsieur André de Ribaupierre.

Herr Furtwängler has come to conduct several times. Gieseking and Backhaus have played to us. Many concerts have been given by the Zürich orchestra at the Tonhalle under Doctor Andreae. And at the opera-house there have been many performances directed by Herr Denzler and others. That grand old man, Herr Weingartner, visited us regularly until his lamented death. Not many weeks before he died I met him and his talented wife at a reception given by that ardent patroness of musicians, Frau Reiff, in her apartment. Then he seemed full of life and accompanied many of his songs on the piano for our delight. He also conducted the orchestra at the Tonhalle in a delicious symphony by Bizet, which he told me he had unearthed unexpectedly in Paris. A splendid musician and a delightful personality, his death caused great grief in Switzerland, where for years he had made his home.

The famous Swiss pianist, Herr Edwin Fischer, comes to Zürich several times every year, and his concerts are always crowded. He visited us at our home near Maienfeld, and one evening played to us for two hours. Although the greater part of his life has been spent in Germany, recently he has built for himself a house near Lucerne, of which he showed us the photograph. He means, when he can snatch an occasional holiday, to go there to rest. He is one of the most eager, astonishingly energetic human beings I have ever encountered, and also one of the kindest. Never have I heard him "crab" a fellow-musician. He seems to be totally free from the prevalent sin of envy.

Another fine musician and a man of sterling character, of whom Switzerland is rightly proud, is Monsieur André de Ribaupierre, one of the greatest violinists I have heard. And I think in my time I have heard all the great ones, from Herr Joachim and Madame Norman Neruda to the latest wonder of our modern day, Menuhin. Monsieur de Ribaupierre lived for many years in America, both as

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violinist and conductor. But eventually Switzerland called him back to his own land and now he is established in Lausanne as director of a flourishing music school. He has a great many pupils, but finds time to appear every year at innumerable concerts. Before the war he went often to Paris, where his success was immense, but now, unable to travel far afield, he confines his energies to Switzerland. He comes often to Zürich, where he plays with the big orchestra of the Tonhalle, and also in quartet music and in delightful concerts for violin and piano with Madame Blancard.

Each summer, even in wartime, there is a species of musical festival in Zürich. Madame Flagstad comes, and takes part in Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, in operas from *The Ring* and in Beethoven's *F delio*.

Herr Furtwängler has conducted the *Meistersinger* and afternoon concerts in the Wesendonck villa where Wagner so often made music and sought, and found, inspiration. Before Italy entered the war that marvellous coloratura singer, Toti dal Monte, used to come, but now, though Herr Lorenz, Frau Frida Leider, and other German singers of note are heard in Zürich from time to time, the Italians seem to have decided to give us the cold shoulder. Yet Switzerland, of course, remains strictly neutral, and many Germans and Italians are to be seen here in the chief hotels.

A great many Swiss people are certainly fond, even very fond, of music, and like good music. For instance, they appreciate enormously the music of Bach and Mozart. On the other hand, they are extraordinarily critical and, I think, often wrongly critical. By that I mean that it seems to be that they often condemn what is admirable. I have been struck by this again and again. It seems that they sometimes love to condemn rather than to praise. I will give two or three instances which I think go to prove the truth of my assertion.

During several years there was in the opera company of the Stadttheater of Zürich an outstanding singer, very handsome, with one of the finest voices I have ever heard, with a great European and American reputation, unusual vocal and dramatic ability and a large repertoire. Excellent in Italian music, she was equally good in the music of Wagner. She had sung with success at Bayreuth. Her Ortrud in *Lohengrin* was perhaps the finest I have heard, her Amneris in *Aïda* was wonderful, and she was certainly one of the very best Carmens I have listened to. Whenever she sang the opera-house seemed quite full. And yet she was often cruelly attacked in the Swiss papers. Her name was Sigrid Onegin, and she died recently at the early age of 52. She was not a friend of mine. I only spoke to her once for a moment. But more than once I felt absolutely indignant at what was written about her in the Zürich papers, and wished I had a chance to break a lance in her favour. Having for several years written on music in a prominent London paper, my journalistic blood seemed to call me

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to battle. I *knew* Sigrid Onegin was remarkable and thought that the way in which she was sometimes treated by the Swiss critics was entirely unfair and unjust. Many people felt as I did about it. The last time I heard her sing was in a Zürich church where she sang *Lieder*. Again she was attacked by one of the principal critics, who went so far as to write that her singing was so bad that it drove him out of the building. On another occasion, when she gave a vocal recital in the biggest concert-hall of the town to a very large audience, a critic wrote that she should have engaged a much smaller hall as so few people wanted to hear her. This was simply untrue. I can vouch for that, for I was one of the audience. Frau Reiff, well known in Zürich for her love and understanding of music, who both plays and composes herself, and who has known most of the great musicians of the time, said to me once of Madame Onegin, "She is a very great artist." Yet some of the Swiss critics wrote of her with contempt, and after the last concert she ever gave in Zürich there was a critique of her in the chief Zürich newspaper which was described to me by a friend as "simply disastrous."

Another instance of the very peculiar taste of some Swiss critics occurred in the small town of Vevey, so well known to travellers.

While I was living in Tour de Peilz, Herr Furtwängler brought his Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra to give a concert there. This orchestra is, I suppose, the finest in Europe and one of the finest in the world. It was, however, not quite good enough for the music critic of the obscure Vevey paper, who wrote adversely of its performance and of its conductor. Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra were not quite good enough for Vevey.

At an operatic festival in Zürich to which I went, Herr Lorenz, the famous Wagnerian tenor of Germany, a star of Bayreuth and Berlin, sang in the rôles of Siegfried and Tristan, of course wonderfully. But he was so badly criticized that an acquaintance told me he was completely upset by the newspapers, and couldn't sleep at night because of them. Great artists of world fame are often extremely sensitive, and I know of artists who are almost afraid of performing in Switzerland because "scarcely anything is good enough for the Swiss."

I was personally acquainted with the critic of a tiny paper in an obscure part of Switzerland who was hardly ever satisfied by any musical performance however excellent it was. But let me be truthful. He was an Englishman who, having lived almost always in Switzerland, seemed to have caught the infection.

In one of his plays Oscar Wilde made a character say, "What was good enough for my Father is not good enough for me." Some of the Swiss critics say in other words, "What is good enough for the rest of the world is not good enough for us."

Being English, I am of course not neutral in this war and have been

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warned now and then, generally in a friendly spirit, to be very careful what I do and with whom I am seen in public. All the movements of us who are not Swiss are sedulously noted down. My knowledge of this came about in a rather curious way.

I happen to have a Turkish friend, who lives in French Switzerland but occasionally visits Zürich. Like myself, he has absolutely nothing to do with politics and is, I am sure, quite as harmless as I am. About two years ago he paid one of his visits here and we were together in public several times. We had tea together at the Hôtel Baur au Lac, which is the favourite meeting-place of many people of all the nations who come to Zürich. We dined together in two or three restaurants, and he came to my apartment more than once.

All this was very pleasant, but when my friend returned to his home in French Switzerland he was visited by the police, who in the meantime had, it seems, opened and read two entirely innocent letters of mine to him.

They asked him a lot of questions about me and my political opinions, and told him that they knew when and where he and I had been together. And they proved their knowledge by mentioning the places where we had been seen, and the times of our meetings.

He was rather upset by this interview and wrote to me about it. I replied that as my conscience was absolutely clear, and I had nothing to hide, I did not mind any investigations the police made about me.

Later on, however, I discovered that, for some unexplained reason, reports were going about Switzerland, and were being widely spread, stating that, though English, I was pro-Nazi. Even Germans asserted this.

I confess that this scandalous nonsense upset me. I could not ignore such poisonous reports, and I decided to go to our Legation at Berne and lay the matter before my Minister, Mr. (now Sir David) Kelly, who is at present the British Ambassador to the Argentine. Fortunately I had known him and his charming Belgian wife in Egypt, where he had been attached to our Embassy in Cairo.

I wrote to Mr. Kelly and asked whether I could see him for a few minutes if I came to Berne. He replied inviting me to lunch at the Legation on a certain day. Of course I accepted, and on the day appointed I went to the Legation a few minutes before the lunch hour.

When I was shown into the drawing-room I found Mrs. Kelly there alone. She greeted me cordially and said at once, "I know why you have come!"

"Impossible!" I said.

"Yes, I do! You have come about money, the difficulty of getting any money out from England."

I reassured her. "It isn't that. Though not exactly 'rolling,' I have money enough in the Swiss banks to pay my way for some months."

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She congratulated me on this and then asked, "What is it, then? My husband told me of your letter."

In a few words I explained about the absurd rumours spread concerning me through Switzerland. While I was doing this the Minister joined us.

When I had finished, he said, "What scandalous nonsense! We here haven't heard a word against you, and of course if we had we shouldn't have believed it."

Several guests then came in and I said no more about my little affairs. But when, after lunch, I was saying goodbye the Minister accompanied me to the drawing-room door and said, "Would you like to do something for us which might show the little world in Zürich that we know you are neither pro-German nor pro-Nazi?"

"Yes, indeed I should," I replied.

He then told me that he and Mrs. Kelly had to come to Zürich on a certain date on official business and added, "Would you care to give a tea for us in the hall of the Baur au Lac Hotel? That will show everyone what we think about you."

Of course I was delighted, thanked him and took down the date.

"Whom shall I ask to meet you?" I said.

"Any of your friends, except two or three poisonous people who are down on my black list," he answered.

He then mentioned two names of men whom I knew of but did not know personally. One of these had made himself conspicuous by public abuse of England, although he was an Englishman.

The other had also possessed an English passport.

I said to Mr. Kelly, "Do you know either of them?"

"I don't," he said. "*But they know me now.*"

When the day he had mentioned came I gave the tea in the central hall of the Hôtel Baur au Lac and Mr. and Mrs. Kelly came to it. I invited a good many of my friends to meet them: among them General Aziz Izzet Pasha; his wife, Princess Izzet; his daughter, Princess Hassan; an American friend, Miss Sinclair, and her stepfather, Mr. Matthey; my Turkish friend, Ali Rauf; Gerhard Sattler; Mr. Zito Dinner, a remarkable man, half Swiss, half Mexican Indian, who is an expert graphologist, hand-reader, and occasionally prophet and health expert; the British Consul-General, Mr. Bell, and his wife; Madame von Pannwitz, a very valued friend of mine who hails from the Argentine, but who has lived for years in Holland; and two or three others. The hall was full of people at the tea hour, and from that day to this I have heard no more attacks on my reputation as an Englishman, all of whose sympathies in this war are entirely British.

I owe gratitude to Sir David and Lady Kelly and am glad to acknowledge it. I could not help being sorry when I heard of Sir David's

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appointment as Ambassador to the Argentine, although I was glad of his well-merited advancement in the diplomatic career. Both he and Lady Kelly told me that they would be very sorry to leave Switzerland and all the friends they had made there.

The British Consul-General who has replaced Mr. Bell is a very clever and energetic man, and I have had the pleasure of meeting him and his wife on a good many occasions and of being entertained by them more than once.

The Consul, Mr. Cable, has many talents. He is an excellent linguist, a capital public speaker, completely at home when delivering an oration to a large assembly, a first-rate organizer, much above the average as a lawn-tennis player, and a man with marked social aptitudes and exuberant energy.

Since his arrival in Zürich he has made it his business to cultivate the acquaintance of, I should think, all the really important Swiss in Switzerland, and has entertained a great number of them at consular banquets given by him and his wife at the Grand Dolder Hotel on the hill above the city.

He has carefully studied the chief Swiss industrial enterprises, and knows all that is going on not only in the British colony but in other colonies as well.

He is closely associated with Mr. Woods, the very popular, cordial and efficient American Consul-General, who seems to an outsider like myself to work hand-in-hand with him.

Both Britain and America are particularly well represented in Zürich, and Mrs. Cable and Mrs. Woods are excellent hostesses and have made many friends in Switzerland.

A rather curious thing happened during one war winter which went to prove that not only the Swiss police took a certain interest in those who visited me, or with whom I was known to be in contact.

I have a very charming woman friend, whom I have known well for some years and who has lived for a long time, and is living now, in Switzerland. She is of German origin, but married an Englishman and has a British passport. Many of her closest relations, however, live in Germany.

After I had rented my apartment in Muralto, which is in the Nüscheler Strasse in the centre of Zürich, I asked her one evening to come to tea with me, and she accepted and came. The time for the "black-out" had not arrived and no shutters were drawn over my windows, though thin curtains were drawn.

While we were having tea and talking there came a sharp rattling noise against one of the windows which startled us both.

"What's that?" I exclaimed.

"Somebody's thrown a handful of pebbles against your window," my friend said.

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I got up, pulled back the curtains, opened the window and looked into the darkening street.

I could see no one outside.

"Extraordinary!" I said. "Who can have done it?"

"I wonder!" said my friend, as I shut the window and came back to my seat.

A few weeks passed, and then once more I invited her to tea and she came.

Nothing odd had occurred in the meanwhile. But now again during tea there came a sharp rattle of stones on my window, and once more I hurried to it, and looked out into the darkness. Nobody was visible to me.

"What on earth does this mean?" I said. "What do you make of it?"

"It's the Gestapo!" my friend said.

"The Gestapo—here!" I exclaimed.

My friend then told me the Gestapo had an establishment close to where I was living. Her arrival at the apartment house must have been observed, and the stones had been thrown to draw the person she was visiting to the window.

At first I was inclined to doubt this, but I believe now her explanation was well founded. For immediately after this second occurrence my friend was warned by the German Consulate in Zürich that she must avoid visiting an Englishman or she would find herself in difficulties if she ever went back to Germany.

Since then she has never visited me.

Before we were separated by this warning Herr Furtwängler, the famous German conductor, came to Winterthur, not far from here, to give a concert with the beautiful orchestra formed and financed there by Herr Werner Rheinhart, one of the family of Swiss millionaires who have conferred such benefits upon their native city. His brother, Herr Oscar Rheinhart, possesses a glorious collection of paintings by world-famous masters, which is open to the public on certain days of each week.

I knew Herr Werner Rheinhart, but had never heard his orchestra, and I decided to motor over to hear the Furtwängler concert and invited my friend against whom the pebbles were subsequently thrown to come with me, as she is a passionate lover of music, and as we both know Herr Furtwängler.

I bought tickets and we went.

Soon after we reached the fine concert-hall built by Herr Werner Rheinhart as a temple of music, but before the time fixed for the concert, I took my seat, but my friend, having met some acquaintances, lingered to talk to them. I saw her speaking animatedly to a good-looking lady and a man, strangers to me, and presently the lady looked across at me and I guessed they must be speaking about me.

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When it was almost time for the concert to begin the conversation was broken off, and the two strangers passed me and went to some seats in my row but not next to me.

Then my friend joined me. "Do you know who these people are?" she asked.

"No," I said.

"They are the German Minister to Switzerland and his wife. She's a charming woman and has read many of your books. I told her I had come with you and asked if I should introduce you to her."

"And she said 'no,'" I commented.

"Yes. She had to. She told me they were absolutely forbidden to speak to any English person. But they are both coming to supper with Herr Rheinhart after the concert and we shall be there."

"Let's hope I shan't be put next to her," I said. "She looks very attractive, but that would be disastrous, wouldn't it?"

"Herr Rheinhart would never do that."

"No, of course not. I was only making a feeble joke."

After the concert there was a large supper-party. Only a very few "official" people had places specially allotted to them, the rest of us sat wherever we liked. All went as merrily "as a marriage bell," and the German Minister's charming wife and I only looked at each other from a distance.

My look, I fancy, was rather wistful!

Sir David and Lady Kelly were sorry to leave the friends they had made in Switzerland when they left for the Argentine and expressed their sorrow to me, but they never told me who these friends were, and sometimes I have wondered how many of them were Swiss.

Thinking about this, I realize that though I have lived "off and on" in Switzerland for a great many years I have never gone very much into Swiss society. I doubt if the entirely Swiss care much to be intimate with people of other nations. I have found them always very polite and sometimes even cordial, but they seldom seem anxious for real intimacy with a foreigner.

When we lived in and near Montreux many of those we knew best were English or cosmopolitan. Very few were entirely Swiss. And here in Zürich most of those I know well are either foreign or, if not that, have mixed blood in their veins, though some have acquired Swiss nationality. My friends Gerhard Sattler and Erik Wiget have both of them mixed blood, the one Polish blood, the other Swedish blood. General Aziz Izzet Pasha and his family are Egyptians. Madame von Pannwitz has Argentine nationality. Miss Sinclair is American. Mrs. Horton is half American. Ali Rauf is Turkish. Princess Handjéri, a delightful companion, and a very real person, comes from Schleswig-Holstein, has travelled widely, lived much in Paris and is a citizen of the world. And so on, and so on.

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Nevertheless my great friend, Madame Iselin, formerly Miss Reiter, was Swiss, and another great friend, Madame Emil Paravicini, whom I met first in Egypt and came to know intimately, was, I believe, brought up in Switzerland and has Swiss nationality, though she seems to me rather typically French than Swiss. She has perfect taste in dress and in the arrangement of an interior, speaks French like a Frenchwoman and has lived much in Paris. She is the sister-in-law of the Monsieur Paravicini who was for so long Swiss Minister in London, and the most popular of all the diplomats there, partly owing to his clever wife's great success in society.

There are many learned and interesting professors in Zürich. Unfortunately I know only a few of them. I went to Professor Fehr's delightful lectures in English, but never knew him personally. His successor, Professor Straumann, I do know and like very much. Many times I have heard him lecture on English literature, and he has increased my knowledge and understanding of many of our poets, philosophers and novelists.

Professor Charly-Clerc, from French Switzerland, is a very live wire and I have had some delightful and rewarding talks with him and have dined at his home. He has amazing vitality. He lectures on French literature at the Zürich Polytechnic, has written books and many plays, and has untiring energy. He needs, he told me, very little sleep, often begins reading and studying at five in the morning, and after breakfast works steadily on until lunch. Madame Charly-Clerc calls him "un vrai dynamo." They have two sons, both of whom are professors, and a third son who has written several books.

Professor Hess, whom I meet fairly often in the company of Aziz Izzet Pasha, is, I believe, entirely Swiss. He has retired from work now and prefers to live in seclusion. He is a savant and was made a professor when he was only twenty-three years old. He taught Chinese for years, and went out to Egypt, where he became tutor for Arabic to the wife of the Khedive, whom he knew very well. He speaks French fluently and also knows English. One never meets him in general society, but Aziz Izzet Pasha is an old friend of his. They were together in Egypt for many years and like to meet and to talk over old times. Professor Hess is devoted to Aziz Izzet Pasha. And so am I. I have known him now for many years, having met him first in Egypt. But my present intimacy with him has developed in Switzerland. For years the Pasha and his family have spent the summer months in Zürich. During the whole of these war years they have lived entirely in Switzerland. The Pasha has had a very varied and distinguished career. He was an equerry to the ex-Khedive, afterwards equerry to Prince Mohamed Aly. He was in the English army when a young man and subsequently became a general in the Egyptian army. He has been Egyptian Minister in London, and Minister for

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Foreign Affairs in Egypt. And finally he was elected unanimously as one of the three Regents of Egypt during the minority of the present king. He is a man of great intelligence and culture. But he is more than that; a man of incorruptible honesty and a very great gentleman. His wife is a Princess of the Egyptian Royal family.

One other friend I have made in Zürich, undoubtedly one of the cleverest and most intellectual people there, is an Englishwoman married to a Swiss gentleman. Her name is Frau Hottinger and I have a great deal of admiration for her remarkable energy and varied ability, as author, speaker, translator and teacher—or perhaps the better term would be trainer. Frau Hottinger has written a quite admirable little book on Zürich. She has translated many of the stories of Gottfried Keller into English. Her lectures, some of which are given in the University, are famous, and at one time she spoke a great deal on the radio. As to her power of training: she has shown this in connection with a young actress at the Schauspielhaus of Zürich, Maria Becker, who, I am convinced, will before very long be known as a really great actress. Already she is famous in Zürich, where, of course, she acts only in German. But I predict for her European and probably world fame later on when the war is over and travel becomes possible. I was introduced to her by Frau Hottinger, who is training her in English, which Fräulein Becker already speaks excellently. They are working together on some of the plays of Shakespeare, in which Fräulein Becker wishes to appear in English.

Frau Hottinger, who is highly educated and widely read, is an enthusiast for everything really first-rate in music, art and literature. Without being tiresomely "high-brow," she is rightly fastidious, and she has a remarkable gift for inspiring others with her own enthusiasm. If Maria Becker presently makes a name for herself in English on the English or American stage, this will certainly be owing partly to Frau Hottinger. And Fräulein Becker will, I feel sure, be the first to acknowledge this. She has everything to recommend her to the public, youth, energy, good looks, a beautiful voice, power and first-rate diction. She is the idol of the public in Zürich.

Although during the war I have spent the greater part of my time in Zürich, with occasional trips to the peace and beauty of our home near Maienfeld, I have now and then gone into French Switzerland to visit my great friend, Mrs. Horton, who still lives and entertains in her delicious home, Le Petit Sully, near Vevey. And it is owing to her that I made acquaintance with the ex-King of Spain, who before his sad death spent many of the summer months at a hotel in Lausanne and went out a great deal in the society scattered along the shores of Lac Léman.

During one of my visits to Mrs. Horton we received an invitation to a garden-party given by the American Minister at Berne, Mr. Leland

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Harrison, and his wife, and we motored there to spend the afternoon and stayed on to dinner. When we arrived, one of the first people I saw was King Alfonso immersed in a game of bridge. His Majesty told me later that he had never played bridge and knew nothing about the game until he met and became engaged to Princess Ena of Battenberg.

"She taught me," he said. "And now bridge is one of my chief pleasures in the life out of office."

He did not say this in a tone of regret. During the few times I was with His Majesty I never heard him complain, or even hint complaint, of the adverse fate which had so drastically altered his life.

I never play cards and don't even know how to play bridge. No doubt this is my loss. I judge that it must be, because so many of those I know are passionately addicted to bridge and apparently could scarcely confront the uncertainites of life without it. But I never seem to get enough time for reading, as I give up daily so many hours to writing, and I don't believe I possess any card-sense. Whether King Alfonso was a great reader, or whether, like King Edward the Seventh, he scarcely ever opened a book, I don't know. He struck me as a man with a very live mind, well acquainted with statecraft, with a wide knowledge of, and interest in, finance, a keen sportsman, an expert *homme du monde*, kind-hearted and full of humour. He was also extremely easy to get on with and seemed to enjoy himself in society. But I doubt if he was "literary."

Before being presented to him I had seen him a good many times, in England and later on in Egypt, both in Louxor and in Cairo. He was a friend of friends of mine in Cairo, General and Mrs. Brook, and I had seen him lunching with them at the Semiramis Hotel, at the Louxor and Cairo race meetings and elsewhere. He had always seemed to be enjoying himself, and having, and helping others to have, a good time.

Now I met him in his Swiss exile.

From things I have been told I have reason to believe that when I met him he already knew he was in a dangerous condition of health, perhaps even that he could not hope to have a long life and attain old age. But I knew nothing about this and had no suspicion that there was anything the matter with him. He looked young, younger than his age, vital, lively. There was nothing tragic about him. His changed life seemed to run upon pleasant lines. But I know from others, who knew him intimately, that he was passionately fond of Spain and longed to return there.

And I think he had hopes of some day getting back to his throne.

I lunched in his company more than once and noticed that he was very careful about what he ate, though evidently he appreciated the talent of Marguerite Horton's excellent chef.

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When I first met him, and had a short talk with him *à deux*, he inquired about my writing and said, "What are you working on now?" But I had the impression that he did this merely out of good nature and the wish to show me that he knew something about me. I feel sure he had never read a word I had written.

When I lunched in his company a few times there were other people present, and the King talked a great deal, mainly about political events, the condition of Europe, finance, and war possibilities. He never talked about either art or literature. But on one occasion he discussed conditions in Spain and said they were "simply terrible." He told us the poorer classes were literally starving. For some reason that I am unacquainted with he was convinced that the war would be short, and one day I heard him venture on a very definite prophecy. It was in summer and he said to us all who were assembled round Mrs. Horton's table:

"I predict that this war will be finished when next June comes round. If my prophecy comes true, let us all here assemble together again and celebrate peace."

I thought of His Majesty's words in the following June.

The speaker was dead and the war was not over.

The King was a capital raconteur and had a keen sense of humour. He told me the following story.

As most people know, he lived a great deal in Rome at the Grand Hotel after he lost his throne. While he was there he made the acquaintance of two charming American women who entertained him royally. One night of nearly full moon he asked them both to dine with him at a restaurant celebrated for its marvellous cuisine. Afterwards he meant to show them something of the Eternal City by moonlight.

After a very good, but exceedingly rich, dinner they got into His Majesty's motor-car and drove to various points in Rome which they duly admired in the silvery radiance. The American ladies seemed delighted, but their Royal cicerone was less so. The too-good dinner had had upon him a disastrous effect. He began to feel like a man in the preliminary throes of *mal de mer*.

He struggled valiantly against this horrible onset, but when finally the car drew up before the fountain of Trevi his resistance was overcome, and he was forced to get up, to lean out of the window, and to make libation before the world-famed source into which such multitudes of coins have been flung by travellers and lovers of Rome.

While engaged in this tragic action of homage a fiacre approached, driven by a very old cabman, one of those wrinkled and sun-dried worthies who know by sight every personality in their city. In the figure thrusting out of the motor-car window and paying his enforced tribute in the light of the moon he recognized King Alfonso of Spain,

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and lifting an arm with a noble gesture he swept off his hat, and with uncovered bald head making obeisance he sonorously exclaimed:

"Maesta!"

The King, though very good-natured and apparently "easy going," could, if it was necessary, show a sharp edge to impertinence. Once when he was travelling he came across a vulgar man who had been enormously rich but had lost most of his money. This personage, without introduction, hailed him with the remark, "Say, King, you and I ought to know each other!"

"Really! Why is that?" said the King.

"Why? Because we are both exes! You're an ex-king and I'm an ex-millionaire."

"I think you have the advantage over me, sir."

"How so?"

"Because you are two exes to my one. Besides being an ex-millionaire you're an ex-gentleman."

King Alfronso was always noted for his great personal courage, which he proved again during his last terrible illness. He suffered dreadfully during it and had fits of semi-suffocation, but he was seldom or never heard to complain. A great many people, apart from his own family, miss him, for he was very human and in consequence greatly beloved.

Queen Ena still comes to French Switzerland during the summer months.

I have had the pleasure of meeting Her Majesty since the King's death and of having on one occasion a long conversation with her.

The Queen—she is still Queen of Spain, as King Alfonso, often called an ex-king, never abdicated—though evidently much attached to Spain, in spite of the terrible events which befell her there at the very beginning of the reign and at its end, and still hopeful of setting foot in it again, has something extremely English, British even, in her make-up, which immediately and inevitably appeals to one so completely English as myself. For instance, Her Majesty has a strong, even robust sense of humour, and laughs whole-heartedly at anything which amuses her. She has great courage, and I noticed that she has a feeling amounting to real scorn of self-pity.

"Self-pity," she said to me, "disintegrates. I try never to yield to it and dislike it in others."

She became Queen of Spain at the age of only eighteen and was nearly done to death on her wedding day.

The coach in which she drove to the palace with the King after the celebration of their marriage was drawn by eight horses. When the anarchist's attempt on the life of the monarch was made and the bomb was thrown, six of these horses were disembowelled, over a hundred of the spectators were killed, the wedding veil of the Queen was torn

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into fragments and her train was bespattered with blood. She told me that after the bomb burst, for a moment everything seemed to become dark to her, she saw nothing and did not realize what had happened.

They got into the palace, and what did she have to do? She had immediately to receive the grandees of Spain, go round the circle and shake hands with every one of them.

When the ceremonies of this bewildering day at last were over, when night fell and she and the King retired to their bedroom, which had several windows, over which heavy curtains were drawn, the King drew a revolver, went to these windows and searched behind all the curtains. He then examined the rest of the room minutely, and finally laid the loaded revolver upon the night-table by the bed and said to his young bride,

"Now I believe we are safe!"

A strange and terrible beginning to their married life!

On the day after the wedding King Alfonso said to the Queen, "There's something we have to do today."

Her Majesty inquired what it was, and the King replied, "We have to show our people that we are not afraid of them. We are going, you and I, to drive through the streets of Madrid in an open victoria and without any escort. No guards must accompany us. We must prove our courage publicly to our subjects and the world."

Without hesitation the Queen agreed. The drive took place, and the young couple were rapturously acclaimed by the populace for their pluck.

The Queen evidently believes that the Monarchy will eventually be restored in Spain.

"And then you will go back to Spain, Ma'am?" I said.

The Queen did not answer in words, but I did not discern a negative in her expression.

She still loves England and hopes to see again her house in Porchester Place.

Mrs. Ronnie Greville when she died left the Queen thirty thousand pounds in her will. Her Majesty told me this and said she was touched by Mrs. Greville's remembrance of her. But she added,

"Nevertheless I couldn't help feeling that some of Mrs. Ronnie's poor friends—and she had several—needed the money more than I did!"

Once when I was staying with Marguerite Horton in wartime she said to me, "Today a friend of mine will be with us at lunch, who has reason for wishing to meet you. I think he will interest you, not only for what he is but for something he has."

I felt curious and asked who this friend was.

"His name is Maurice Sandoz, and recently he bought the Château

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de Burier here. He belongs to the well-known Sandoz family and he's a clever man and a great traveller."

I said I should be delighted to meet him, and wondered what he had that must specially interest me.

When we met I found that this possession was an island. But he didn't let me know this immediately.

Monsieur Sandoz is a highly cultivated and artistic man, who has been, and still is, a great traveller, and owns various properties besides the Château de Burier. After luncheon he told me that one of these properties had been described minutely by me in one of my books.

"In which book?" I asked.

"In *A Spirit in Prison*," he answered.

And I heard that the tiny isle near Posilipo, which I took as the scene for that story, had been bought by him and, out of wartime, was generally visited by him during the hot months of summer. He told me that he had a secretary who looked after his house there and the island.

When we parted that day Monsieur Sandoz asked me to sign a copy of my Sicilian novel, *The Call of the Blood*, for him. Of course I was very glad to do this. He did not tell me then that he too was a writer, and I only found this out subsequently, when I met him one morning by chance at the station of Ragaz, where he was waiting to take a train. I was *en route* to Zürich. He was *en route* to—Mexico.

We both had to wait for a few minutes, and presently he said: "You signed a book of yours for me; will you accept a book I have written, which for a reason closely connected with your country might possibly interest you?"

I said I should be delighted. He went away and returned holding a book in a paper cover which he handed to me. The title of it was *Le Labyrinthe*, and he had written a few words in it addressed to me.

"It deals with a very curious mystery connected with Scotland," he said.

Just then his train came in and we said goodbye.

I don't know whether he reached Mexico, but I do know that he is in New York at present, waiting till war conditions will allow him to get back to Europe. From there he recently cabled to a publisher in Switzerland to forward to me another book by him, a collection of short stories. Both these volumes are written in French. In the meanwhile I had written to the Château de Burier my opinion of *Le Labyrinthe*.

It is always to me a great pleasure to be able to praise with sincerity. When I first met Monsieur Sandoz, not having heard of him as an author, I supposed him to be merely an obviously clever and cultivated man, whose means made him independent of the need to have a

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profession, and who was a charming and interesting amateur. When, however, I read *Le Labyrinthe* I realized at once that here was an admirable writer, and this impression was confirmed, and even deepened, when I received his book of short stories. Most of them are brief and slight, but all are quite admirably written in perfect French and one or two, in my opinion, are worthy to be ranked with the work of Guy de Maupassant. One especially made upon me a most vivid and horrible impression and is a story which I shall certainly never forget. It deals with an episode in a cemetery near Constantinople, a cemetery which I happen to know well, and in which more than once I have wandered alone, as, apparently, Monsieur Sandoz did. The name given to the story is "Au Cimetière de Scutari."

Apart from the dreadful theme of the story, which chills the blood, there is a central episode in it that is intensely dramatic, when one understands its fearful implication; and the brief and concentrated end on board ship in the Bosphorus is a masterpiece of concision. In a short sentence it reveals the intimate horror of the writer when he realizes what would have happened to him if—!

Le Labyrinthe is a short novel. It appears to reveal the explanation of a strange mystery which has intrigued and puzzled generations of British people, including myself. Whether it is founded on fact, invented, or merely imagined, I have at present no means of knowing. I hope to ask Monsieur Sandoz to "put me wise" as to this if I ever meet him again. In any case, the book is intensely interesting.

One cannot read the work of Maurice Sandoz without feeling that he has a taste for the macabre, as Guy de Maupassant had. I spoke of this once to someone in Zürich who knows him well and he said:

"That is true."

He then alluded to the island off the coast of Posilipo, and said that he had often thought that perhaps it was this taste for the macabre which had led Monsieur Sandoz to buy it. I asked him to make his meaning clear to me, and he said:

"Don't you know what happened in connection with the island before our friend bought it?"

"No," I said. "What was it?"

He then told me the story of the people who had lived in the house on the island.

The island is very near to the mainland, and is separated from it by a narrow stretch of the sea. It can, of course, be easily reached by boat in calm weather, but in stormy weather it could only be gained by a cage, big enough only to contain one person, which was swung from shore to shore on a cable.

For a time the owners of the island were a husband and wife, who were exceedingly devoted to each other and also seem to have lived in a happy isolation, apart from the busy world. They were, however,

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very fond of music and art, and had, as well as their island home, a small flat in Naples, in which they sometimes spent the night when the opera or a concert held them to a late hour in the city.

One evening in changeable weather they left the island for Naples to attend a performance of opera at the San Carlo Theatre.

While they were enjoying it a storm came on with violent wind and a stormy sea. The natural thing for them to do, one might have thought, would have been to stay at their flat in Naples for the night. But for some reason, unknown to the man who told me their story, they decided against this and set out for their island home.

In the dead of the night they reached the edge of the stretch of stormy sea that divided them from it, and apparently it was decided between them that the husband should cross first, and send back the cage for his wife. This at least was inferred from what actually took place.

The husband did cross first and sent the cage back, then waited for his wife to arrive. She never arrived, though she started to come. Owing to the force of the storm the cable snapped while she was *en route* and she was engulfed by the waves. When her husband realized this he went into the house and committed suicide.

Although I can enjoy reading stories of terror written by such masters as Edgar Allan Poe, Lord Lytton—I remember his "The Haunters and the Haunted, or The House and the Brain"—Sheridan Lefanu, and others who had a peculiar gift for rousing in the imagination the spectre of fear; and though in such stories as "The Return of the Soul," "How Love Came to Professor Gildea," and other tales, I have indulged my own taste for the macabre, I don't think I should like deliberately to try to connect my own life intimately with a tragedy of real life, or with any place which I knew had been the scene of some shocking deed. I am very conscious of the influence of place, and, for instance, should shrink from sleeping in a room in which I knew that some dreadful or sinister event had been enacted.

I know very well a famous hotel in a foreign country in which I have often stayed for weeks with great satisfaction. During my last visit to it I learned of two tragedies which had occurred in it since I had last been there. Both these tragedies were connected with a former director whom I had known, and both had taken place during the summer season, during which, owing to its situation, the hotel was almost always comparatively empty of travellers.

The first tragedy concerned a young man who was a friend of the director and who lived in a large city a few miles away from the hotel.

This young man was very gay and fond of society, and especially of dancing. One night very late he turned up at the hotel in evening dress, having come, he said, from a ball in the city, and asked to be

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accommodated with a room for the night. The director, his friend, was already in bed and asleep. He was given a bedroom on the same corridor and shut himself up in it after saying good-night to the hall porter, who, it seems, noticed nothing unusual in his manner. On the following morning he did not appear. Nor did he ring his bell for breakfast. As he had been up so very late on the night before, the director told the servants not to disturb him but to let him have his sleep out. When, however, afternoon arrived and his door remained unopened and locked, and when repeated knocking elicited no reply, the director with some help broke the door open, and the young man was found shot dead on the floor.

A few days after this suicide an intimate friend of mine, who lived in the city the young man and his family belonged to—or in the case of the unfortunate young man had belonged to—went with the girl he was engaged to marry to tea at the hotel. They knew the director, as I did, and he welcomed them and had tea with them.

My friend told me afterwards that during tea the director seemed in his usual spirits, although he alluded to his friend's suicide, and said how dreadful and inexplicable it was.

On the day after this meeting the director was occupied during the morning as usual with the affairs of the hotel. He broke off at noon, and said to his secretary that he wasn't hungry, and was going to his bedroom to have a siesta, as the heat was intense.

"Don't disturb me!" he said. "I'll lie down and have a sleep. I'll be out when it gets a little cooler towards evening."

When the sun began to decline in the west his bedroom door was still shut. Eventually his secretary tried it and found it was locked. He struck on it but there was no reply. Finally he began to be uneasy. He called to two or three of the native servants, knocked again several times and eventually tried to force the lock of the door. As it resisted, however, he went outside of the hotel into a part of the garden which faced the balcony of the director's bedroom. A ladder was procured. The secretary, accompanied by a servant, mounted it, got on to the balcony and found the windows giving on to it shut and fastened inside. He called down for a hammer, and when it had been procured smashed one of the windows with it.

They found within the dead body of the director. He had hanged himself with a piece of rope fastened to the rod which supported the mosquito-curtain that shrouded his bed.

The reason for these two successive suicides became generally known later on throughout the city and in the hotel.

The friendship between the young man and the director was greatly objected to by the family of the young man, whose parents finally threatened to take action unless it was at once brought to an end. On the night of his suicide, before his visit to the hotel, he had had a

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violent altercation with his father, who turned him out of the house. This evidently had led to his suicide.

The reason of the second suicide was this.

Horrified by the death of his son, the father either wrote or cabled a full explanation of its cause to the man who was in supreme control of the great hotel where the director was working, and urged his immediate dismissal from his post.

The dismissal reached him on the morning of the day when my friend and my friend's fiancée met him at tea. The result of it was that he hanged himself on the following day.

Later on, when I was again paying a visit to the hotel, and asked after the director, the whole story was told to me with full details. After I had heard it I asked, "What has happened about the two rooms in which the suicides took place?"

"Happened? What do you mean?" was the reply.

"I mean, do you still let them? Are they occupied? What are their numbers?"

After a pause, the man to whom I was speaking, and who was closely connected with the hotel business, said evasively, "They are not in your part of the hotel. You are not in either of them."

"But you let them?" I said.

"I have nothing to do with that. My chief settles all that sort of thing. I have no voice in the matter. But why do you want to know?"

"You may laugh at me, perhaps," I replied. "But I shouldn't care to sleep in either of those rooms. And, moreover, I feel sure that if I were put in one of them without ever having heard what you have just told me, I shouldn't be able to sleep. Have you had no complaints about them?"

"I have heard none," he said.

And he closed the conversation abruptly. Later I asked the same man if it had been ascertained whether, when the young man unexpectedly arrived at the hotel in the dead of night and was allotted a bedroom close to the bedroom of the director, there had been an interview between them before he committed suicide.

"If there was, nobody knows of it," he replied.

That was my last visit to the hotel, and I have heard nothing more of that double tragedy.

My life in Zürich during these war years on the edge of the conflict that is raging all over Europe, and almost all over the world, is a life of expectation. We are all waiting—waiting for the end, waiting for the new world, wondering what semblance it will have, asking ourselves what sort of Peace poor, faulty, fumbling human beings will be able to patch up. In destruction it must be acknowledged that

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men are brilliant. They perform prodigies of destruction. What will the great rebuilding be like? Will it satisfy? Will it improve matters? Will those who learned no lesson from the war of 1914–1918 learn any lesson from this more awful war?

Opinions are divided about this. But most of those of whom I have asked that question have answered,

"There will always be wars. Human beings will never settle down to permanent peace. Men have to fight. It's in their blood."

Hope abounds, especially among the Anglo-Saxons whom I come across now since the North African Campaign. But pessimism and fear abound too, especially, I notice, among those who are rich and have great possessions. These are terrified of Bolshevism. The old, too, or nearly old, are miserable because the world they have known and enjoyed has passed away, no doubt for ever. I am one of these as regards age. I can even remember a world that knew not bicycles. But I am not among the miserable. The world I have known was in many respects a very pleasant place for many of us. But what a lot of injustice there was in it. How faulty it was! How full of abominable contrasts! I don't think I shall ever be a tiresome *laudator temporis acti*. I want something much better than the comfortable, but very selfish, Victorian age. I want more equality in the world than there was then, than there is now.

The Edwardian age through which I lived was certainly very attractive to me. King Edward the Seventh seemed a perfect representative of it. Night after night, as I sat in my stall at the opera, and saw him coming into the omnibus box and taking up his opera-glasses to survey the glittering women in the first and ground tier boxes, I saw a man who looked, I thought, extremely genial and satisfied with his position in the scheme of the world. King George the Fifth, to me, looked much less so. I saw him often, and several times at close quarters, and he had not the contented expression of his father. Perhaps he had a greater realization of what might be coming. Perhaps he discerned in the distance the cloud no bigger than a man's hand. Queen Alexandra always looked beautiful and amazingly distinguished, the perfect representative of a great social order.

There was elegance in those days. In these days, even still, there is, in its place, smartness.

One can see a good deal of that in Zürich at the Hôtel Baur au Lac, in the hotel itself and in the garden where people assemble in crowds during the summer at the tea hour, to listen to the music, to dance and to watch dancing.

Usually they seem to be on the whole a light-hearted crowd, and the battle of the hats is amusing to watch. Almost all the nations are represented there. Germans still come and go. One can often hear German spoken. Mysterious-looking men gather together in corners

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and talk earnestly, perhaps about world affairs, perhaps about private business. And there are listeners, many listeners. And some of them are rather blatant than subtle.

During the war, a long time ago, I was warned to be very careful what I said when I was at the Baur au Lac. I happen to have a rather penetrating voice and I was advised to moderate it when strangers were lingering not far from me.

"There are professional listeners in that hotel," I was told.

At first I doubted this, but now I am sure it is true. What one says is certainly sometimes noted down, and repeated in quarters that may be called official. Several times I have seen strangers obviously trying to overhear what friends and I were talking about. Now and then they were preposterously open in their behaviour.

In the garden during summer there are multitudes of little tables and chairs closely crowded together. On one occasion just before lunch I was sitting at one of these tables in the company of my friend, General Aziz Izzet Pasha of Egypt. It happened that there was scarcely anyone in the garden at the moment. The Pasha had with him an overcoat which he took off and laid on a seat next to him. While we were talking a very over-dressed and over-painted lady appeared. She stared hard at us, then, though there were dozens of unoccupied chairs, took one near enough to us to hear what we were talking about. We noticed this and lowered our voices.

After a few minutes she changed her seat and moved closer to us. We then spoke very softly. Finally she actually came and established herself beside us on the chair where the Pasha had placed his overcoat. The Pasha then got up and went in to lunch, and I moved away ostentatiously to another part of the garden.

If she was a spy, which I don't believe, she was an incredibly stupid one. But I think she was merely an extremely ill-bred and inquisitive woman. Possibly knowing who the Pasha was, she hoped to scrape acquaintance with him by sitting on his overcoat.

Long before this, and before the war, a certain personage, who on account of his birth was universally known to the public of Zürich, suggested having tea with me and bringing his wife and two children with him. I gladly agreed and suggested that the tea should take place at the Baur au Lac.

He hesitated and then said, "If you don't mind, I'd much rather we had it somewhere else."

I said, "Anywhere you like, sir. I only thought of the Baur au Lac because it's considered the most attractive place for tea in the whole of Zürich."

"Yes. But rather too attractive to certain—shall we call them agents?" he commented.

I gave the tea in my sitting-room in a good but less smart hotel.

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Having lived so much in Switzerland, I know fairly well most of its towns, including Geneva, Berne, Basel, Lucerne, Lugano, Locarno, Lausanne, Bellinzona and others. When we lived near Vevey and in Montreux I used often to visit Geneva, which I had already been familiar with as a boy, having gone there with my family and spent several weeks there later on in the house of a Swiss *pasteur* to improve my French. For a long time I thought I preferred French to German Switzerland, but now that we have settled in German Switzerland I have become attached to that section of the little country and I like Zürich best of all its cities, in spite of one drawback. Its language is German or Schwytzer Dütsch, and either from laziness, incapacity, or possibly a secret rooted disinclination fixed in my nature, I have never learnt to speak German. When I lived in Sicily and Italy I managed to "pick up" enough Italian to read Italian with a fair amount of ease, and to speak it, not really well but sufficiently for ordinary conversational purposes. And I have taken some trouble from time to time to improve my French. But I never even attempted to tackle German until during the present war I began to spend the greater part of my time in Zürich.

Before that, however, during my many months of work on my book, *That Which Is Hidden*, for which I had to study and deal with student life at the University, and came into contact with Werner Vordtriede and with other students, all of them German-speaking, though, like so many Swiss, quick in acquiring other languages, I began to be ashamed of my ignorance of German. Nevertheless, being always busy with work, I did nothing about it until I met a clever student called Erik Wiget, half Swiss, half Swedish, the son of a brilliant Swiss professor, now dead. With him I used to have conversations in French, which he spoke remarkably well, besides being fluent in Swedish, German, English and Schwytzer Dütsch. One day he mentioned to me a friend of his called Gerhard Sattler. This was a name I already knew, as Werner Vordtriede was also a friend of Sattler's and had stayed with him in a little house he had in the Tessin, and had often spoken to me about him.

Although I did not know Gerhard Sattler, he had seen me several times, and once had sat close to me at a lecture I attended given by the exceptionally clever Professor Fehr on English literature at the University.

I asked Gerhard Sattler to call on me and one day he came, and eventually I got to know him well. He urged me to write these memoirs when I was on the point of refusing an offer for them made to me by a London publisher.

He has Swiss nationality and lived at that time with his people in an attractive house with a garden terrace on the hill at the edge of the town near the forest.

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Although about twenty-eight when I first met him, he was still studying hard, but he also found time to give lessons in German and English. The latter language he speaks admirably although he has only paid two brief visits to England.

By him I was eventually encouraged to venture on German lessons in my spare time.

Unfortunately it is terribly difficult for a man of my age to make much progress in a very complicated language new to him. After seventy the memory is not what it was and I shall never be a good, or even a moderately good, German scholar. But I shall learn something, and as my teacher is highly intelligent, the lessons are never dull.

Besides teaching and studying, Gerhard Sattler occasionally writes, and he has contributed to the well-known Zürich paper, the *Neuer Zürcher Zeitung*. Very musical, he has a fine singing voice which unfortunately he uses too seldom. I sometimes wish he had gone in for the career of a concert singer. But, like myself, he decided against a musical career and is now intent on literature. For a good many years he was held back from any great exertions by very delicate health, but recently a severe operation, performed on him by a brilliant Swiss surgeon, has given him at last a chance to put forth all his powers. While he was very ill and in the Red Cross hospital a rather curious experience befell me.

As, perhaps partly from overwork and war-worry, I had begun to feel decidedly "played out," I was persuaded to go to a successful sanatorium and undergo a somewhat drastic "cure" which apparently was beneficial to many people. For three weeks all seemed to go well and I became hopeful. But then a startling change set in.

It is rather difficult to describe, for, though severe, it was also subtle.

In spite of my age, I can truly say that I have never felt old until recently. Lady Randolph Churchill once told me, after she had married her third husband and her brilliant son had long been world-famous, that never in her life had she felt tired. I had never felt old. But after three weeks of his "cure," suddenly I felt as if I were plunging into old age.

Instead of facing the world with an independent spirit, self-possessed and reliant, I became shaky, timorous, horribly nervous, and what is sometimes called "gaga." Fears assailed me, and a sensation of utter impotence overwhelmed me. My nights were hellish and my mind was confused.

Gerhard Sattler was always in the Red Cross hospital, and I visited him there daily after my treatments. But as he slowly gained strength I, on the contrary, wilted, and my intimate friends began to notice it.

Still I persevered with the treatment which apparently benefited others, until at last, just when Gerhard Sattler was leaving the hospital

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for his home, I felt so horribly ill that abruptly I stopped my visits to the sanatorium. I was able with Gerhard's brother, Herbert Sattler, to help the invalid on the journey from the hospital to the house on the hill, and then I resolved to go home and stay there in my little Zürich apartment.

This determination of mine, however, was frustrated by Gerhard's kind mother, Frau Doktor Sattler, and his aunt, Fraulein Toni Sattler. They insisted on my staying on in their house for a few days to be looked after by them, as they and Gerhard said that I was quite unfit to be alone.

I was very thankful to give in to their persuasion, and I shall be eternally grateful to them for their kindness and care of me during those few days. They called in a well-known homeopathic doctor, who at once took me in charge and in a comparatively short time subdued by injections the agonies I was enduring and gradually got rid of my mysterious confusion of mind. Now I am on the way to complete recovery and am allowed to work again after an interval of a good many weeks. I can even take a renewed interest in the battle of the hats at the Hôtel Baur au Lac. I am beginning to feel—I dare not say young again, that would be too absurd—but to forget my age and to look forward to perhaps some years more of work, for I still have several signed contracts with publishers that I should like to fulfil if possible. It is actually as if I were emerging from old age. A wonderful resurrection, for which I bless Doctor Stoller, his injections of bee sting, his tiny pills and his mysterious drops.

As battles rage day and night over our tormented world, here, in neutral Zürich, in the garden, the summer restaurant, the central hall of the Hôtel Baur au Lac, rages the battle of the hats.

Although I have a fairly extensive knowledge and lengthy experience behind me of the feminine world, I have never before witnessed a feminine battle so ardent, so obstinate, so varied, so ingenious, so expensive and so entertaining as this battle. A quantity of women, many of them pretty, take part in it, women of many nations, few of them, however, English. It seems as if every weapon in the feminine armoury were brought into play. There are hats that affront the heavens and there are minute hats which, perched sideways over left or right eyebrows, look like cups and saucers filched from a dolls' house. There are hats smothered in diaphanous veiling and there are hats starkly bare with for ornament one diagonal feather that suggests a bayonet. There are hats which look as if they were made of cloth with masses of upholstery streaming down the backs of the wearers, and there are huge Toreador hats that might frighten a bull-ring.

A day or two ago in the garden I saw two women twittering together. One of them wore a hat with a brim so enormous that it was difficult to make out exactly where the wearer was concealed. Her

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companion had on the tiniest hat I have ever seen. It was not on her head, the whole of which was exposed to the sun. It adhered to her forehead and ended on her eyebrows. The effect of these two together, gesticulating to emphasize their chirps, and nodding and tossing their astoundingly different heads, was purely farcical. But, knowing thay were "smart," they were totally indifferent to this.

In the battle of the hats there are, of course, victors and vanquished as in that other battle of our world. The palm no doubt, if a plebiscite were taken, would go to two ladies who appear every day either in two, or in more than two, new hats, marvellous creations all of them, full of variety in shape, in colour, in adornment, now piled with flowers, now gay with feathers, now demure, now flamboyant, now large, now minute, now daring, now almost nunlike. When they make their entrance for lunch or tea I feel that they tread through a srticken field. The crowd of aspiring women is defeated. No other hats can stand against theirs. The white flags should be hoisted. The lines of prisoners should form up.

Yet, stay! There is one lady, and she happens to be a good friend of mine, too distinguished, or perhaps too refined, to give battle. Her hats, not too many, are never aggressive, are never overloaded with feathers or flowers. They win by their marvellous shapes, which always exactly suit their wearer. They might perhaps be called almost simple, but they are triumphant hats, and were I consulted, I should say to this friend of mine, "You are the victor."

But I'm sure she has no desire to be a victor. She simply follows her taste, and her taste in hats is supremely good.

The variety in human nature is almost bewildering, and sometimes I find it tragic.

Here we are in a little country surrounded on all sides by savage warfare, hemmed in by such misery as the world surely has never known till now. Often on the clear moonlit nights the wail of the sirens tells us that the aeroplanes are passing over the city to deal death to countless human beings, most of them innocent, and destruction to innumerable homes. Every morning the papers are full of narrations of crimes and horrors, of towns burnt out, of hostages murdered, of hundreds drowned in the waters released by the mining of dams upon which millions of money was spent, of airmen shot down in the skies, of armies decimated in burning deserts or on vast plains of ice and snow.

And human beings hear, and read, and one supposes realize—at any rate for a moment—and then settle down to the choice of hats, to be worn in the battle of the day.

Isn't it almost incredible? And isn't it also starkly human? Two questions surge up in the mind and rise to the lips.

One is the question "When?" the other the question "Why?"

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To deal with the first, I will not be so foolish as to try to answer it. But here is a strange story, which was told me last week by a clever friend of mine, who is at the head of a very important enterprise in Zürich. It was related to him by a member of one of the best known families in Switzerland, whose name he gave me.

This man was travelling with a friend recently in a Swiss train, and when they stopped at a station a stranger entered their compartment and sat down. After a few minutes of silence he said to them,

"I possess a peculiar gift. Shall I prove it to you, gentlemen?"

Rather astonished, one of them answered:

"Yes, if you like."

"Well, at the next station an elderly man wearing spectacles will come into our carriage. And before the following station to that is reached he will be dead."

They thought they must be with a lunatic—till they reached the next station. But then an elderly man wearing spectacles did come into their carriage, and while they were travelling on to the following station he did die of a heart-stroke.

After this tragedy the stranger who had prophesied it to them said to them:

"One other prophecy, gentlemen! Note what I say now, This war will end this year."

So much for the question "When?" Believe that strange prophet or not, as you please.

And the eternal question, "Why?"

Who shall answer that? Of whom shall we make inquiry? Shall we go to the ministers of religion, to those who are supposed to be the servants of Christ, and who nevertheless take sides in this war, and even sometimes, moved by "patriotism," bless their world in arms?

Shall we demand a reply from the politicians, time and again proved to be blind?

Or shall we relapse into a comfortable frivolity, pay a visit to the modistes, and say to them:

"The question is 'Why?' You ought to know the answer to it! You tell us!"

Vain questions!

Sometimes I have put them to myself. I remember some words of the poet who died so sadly and so young, and with whom I once spent an interesting evening in London—Ernest Dowson.

They are not long, the weeping and the laughter,
Love and desire and hate;
I think they have no portion in us after
We pass the gate.

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They are not long, the days of wine and roses;
Out of a misty dream
Our path emerges for a while, then closes
Within a dream.

Vitae summa brevis. Soon it is all over; and with our desires, our hopes and our questions we "pass the gate," travel away and are quickly forgotten.

THE END

ROBERT HICHENS.

August 1942-*June* 1943.

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